





Class PT2077

Book .B66

Copyright N<sup>o</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

**COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.**









CATHARINE ELIZABETH GOETHE.

*After an Engraving in Robert Koenig's "Deutsche Literaturgeschichte."*



*Johann Caspar Lavater.*

JOHANN CASPAR LAVATER.





h?  
D. 20.

Goethe, Frau Katharina Elisabeth (Weyer)

# GOETHE'S MOTHER.

CORRESPONDENCE OF CATHARINE ELIZABETH GOETHE  
WITH GOETHE, LAVATER, WIELAND, DUCHESS ANNA  
AMALIA OF SAXE-WEIMAR, FRIEDRICH VON  
STEIN, AND OTHERS.

Translated from the German,

WITH THE ADDITION OF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AND NOTES,

BY

ALFRED S. GIBBS.



WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY

CLARENCE COOK.

NEW YORK:

DODD, MEAD & COMPANY,

PUBLISHERS.



PT 2077  
.B66

COPYRIGHT,  
BY DODD, MEAD & COMPANY.  
1880.

z  
c  
c  
c  
c  
c  
c  
c

LC Control Number



tmp96 031508

"The mother was more like what we conceive as the proper parent for a poet. She is one of the pleasantest figures in German literature, and one standing out with greater vividness than almost any other. Her simple, hearty, joyous, and affectionate nature endeared her to all. She was the delight of children, the favorite of poets and princes. To the last retaining her enthusiasm and simplicity, mingled with great shrewdness and knowledge of character, FRAU AJA, as they christened her, was at once grave and hearty, dignified and simple. She had read most of the best German and Italian authors, had picked up considerable desultory information, and had that mother-wit which so often seems to render culture superfluous in women."

LEWES' LIFE OF GOETHE.

"'She was worthy of life,' said her great son to me in the year 1814, when he revisited his paternal city. 'How intense was her attachment to her friends; how efficient a mediator and helper; how faithful and discreet a confidante was she! She used to say, "Don't lose your presence of mind because the wind blows roughly; and think of Wieland's words, 'Die Hand die uns durch dieses Dunkel führt'—the hand that leads us through this darkness.'" (See page 42.)



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

---

THE letters composing the following collection have been obtained chiefly from the following sources :

1. *Reminiscenzen*. Herausgegeben von Dr. Döring. Leipzig, 1842.

2. *Briefe von Goethe und dessen Mutter an Friedrich, Freiherrn von Stein*. Herausgegeben von Dr. J. J. H. Ebers und Dr. August Kahlert. Leipzig, 1846.

3. *Frau Rath*. Briefwechsel von Katharina Elisabeth Goethe. Nach den Originalen mitgetheilt von Robert Keil. Leipzig, 1871.

Further, two unpublished pamphlets printed for private circulation, viz. :

4. *Briefe der Frau Rath an ihre lieben Enkeleins*. Zwölf Briefe von Goethe's Eltern an Lavater.

The most recent and complete collection is that of Dr. Keil, in which may be found, arranged in chronological order, the best of the previously published letters, with the addition of thirty-four from Goethe's mother, and fifty-three from her various correspondents not heretofore published.

There are a few letters attributed to Goethe's mother in Bettina von Arnim's "Goethe's Correspondence with a Child," of which there is an English translation. These I have not included in my selection, for Bettina's clever and amusing work has fallen, as regards reliability, into general discredit.

One of the charms of the following letters is their quaintness—a quality which, in great measure, they must unavoidably lose in translation. An attempt to reproduce this characteristic in another language would, I believed, result only in a feeble imitation. I have, however, made a somewhat literal version, and have not sought in it to avoid a quaint and antiquated tone when it lent itself naturally to the translation. Traces here and there of their strange and foreign origin did not seem to me objectionable in familiar letters, where the manner is oftentimes as important as the matter.

## TO THE READER.

---

THERE are human characters which, like the prism, present nothing remarkable to the observer who looks at them from a certain side ; but seen at a different angle they touch the commonplaces of life with many-colored light. Such a character was that of the translator of the following letters ; and all who knew him well must have shared the regret felt by the friend of more than thirty years whose mournful lot it is to lay this memorial flower upon his grave, that a light so serene and lovely as beamed from his character could not have cheered a wider circle. Had circumstances pushed him earlier into the ranks of those who serve the public with the pen, we friends who know what were his powers of observation and his skill in description cannot doubt that he would have distinguished himself from the crowd, if only as a writer of travels. His letters, which came to us stayers-at-home from all parts—from Italy, Germany, France, and England—turned the light of his quiet humor upon many a corner of these countries little known to the general, and set before us such lively and varied pictures in a style so limpid and easy, that we often wished for the right to make the public a sharer in our private pleasure. Persuaded by friendly hints, he wrote now and

then for the newspapers and magazines, but he could not be altogether at ease with the public, and we missed the flow of spirits and the abundant humor, playing on a background of common-sense and shrewdness, which made his private letters so welcome.

His character was strongly marked, though he had so serene a disposition, with such quiet manners, that only those who knew him well could guess how deep were his convictions and how firm he was in guarding them. He shunned controversy, and unwillingly put his own opinion forward, yet was ever stanch and true when convinced that any cause required his advocacy. Those who only saw him in the sunshine of life and in the happy circle of friends could not know the strength of his will, his immovableness, when once his feet were planted in the place where it was right for him to stand. But with all this strength he was free from any taint of pugnacity or obstinacy. He could resist, but it was the resistance the rock makes to the pressure of the stream, hiding its refusal under a cushion of sunlit moss, and sweetened with a chance-sown root of violet.

He knew the meaning of friendship, and in that domain he held a gentle sway. But his idea of this affectionate relation was a generous one, and had for its foundation an absolute equality. His integrity was almost childlike in its simplicity. He was not lavish of his heart, but when he gave it he gave it wholly, and he looked in his friend for the sincerity he himself showed. But he had his reserves, and respected those of others, nor would rashly intrude,



but on invitation said strongly what seemed to him the fitting word, and knew better than to speak smooth things when truth was needed.

His departure was sudden, and the news that he was indeed gone came like lightning out of a clear sky. But when the shock was over, and those who loved him were able to think on what had happened, it seemed the crown of good fortune to have been rapt from the battle without so much as the smell of fire upon his garments. For his health had all his life been sound, though never robust, and to his friends no warning had been shown that the end was near. To sit at table with your friend in the bright holiday season, welcoming him home after ten years of absence ; to draw chairs about the gleaming fire when the other guests have gone, and renew in the last hours of the dying year the memories of by-gone days ; to part at the door and watch for a few moments the well-known form disappearing in the cold and gas-lit streets of winter, while we returned to the warmth and light ; and then after two days to read the dreadful telegram that said " Our friend is gone "—how like a dream, after such an experience, seems life to those who remain !

Alfred Seymour Gibbs, the only son and youngest child of Alfred Gibbs and Hannah Nye (there were six daughters, all but two of whom lived to woman's estate, though but one of all survives the only brother), was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts, July 11, 1830, and died in the city of New York, December 29, 1879. His education was carefully conducted, first at the Friends' Academy in New Bedford, and afterward at the Phillips Academy at Andover.

He was ready to enter college at sixteen, but delayed applying for admission for a year owing to a lack of robustness in his health, and by the advice of friends who thought twenty-one young enough to graduate. He accordingly entered Harvard College in 1847, but only remained there two years, and never graduated in form. The writer first made his acquaintance as a fellow-lodger in the house of the late Eliza Lee Follen, who was living in Cambridge while her son, Charles Follen, was making his terms. The house Mrs. Follen occupied being too large for her needs, she consented to give up the vacant rooms to two collegians who should prefer a home in a private family to life "in the yard." Charles Follen and the writer being in the same class, that of 1849, I had already been admitted to the privilege of rooms in his mother's house, and on a day we were informed that a young man from New Bedford, a Freshman, was to have the remaining apartment. Seymour Gibbs appeared, a slightly-built, gentlemanly youth, with an earnest but winning face, and with manners of a frank sweetness that made friends at once. Between us three there began an intimacy which was to make an important element in all our lives, a friendship which never suffered even a moment's temporary eclipse, and which, now that all but one of the circle are gone from this earth—

" All, all are gone, the old familiar faces !"

is looked back upon by the survivor as a shattered dream of happiness for whose long stay in a world where so much is fleeting a man cannot be too grateful.

In a notice of my friend's life, however short, it would not do to pass over in silence such an important event in his education as the two years spent under Mrs. Follen's roof. Both she and her sister, Miss Cabot, were women who would have honored any society; but the influence brought to bear upon Seymour's life by this association was more important than could have been exerted by any merely social opportunities. Of such opportunities, indeed, he did not stand in need; but it is only at certain epoch-making times, such as was this of 1847-9, that society ranges itself into camps and draws together in groups the leaders of the hostile forces contending for the mastery. Mrs. Follen and her sister were important factors in the anti-slavery movement that makes those years so famous in our history; and at Mrs. Follen's house we youths were accustomed to see many of the most active workers in the anti-slavery cause. Here came Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Parker, Mrs. Maria Weston Chapman; and at the times of the annual convention and the anti-slavery fair there was scarcely a notable person on the anti-slavery side who did not present himself at a house where not only was a welcome assured, but a welcome graced by all that was noble and lovely in woman's hospitality. Mrs. Follen's circle was by no means restricted to the party in whose councils she shared. She was related by blood to many of the families who threw their influence into the opposite scale; and as it was impossible for such a personality as hers—with her beauty of person, her gracious dignity of manner, combined with a childlike simplicity and directness, and a ready

wit—to be dropped out of any circle to which it naturally belonged, for mere political differences, we were saved from the narrowness that must have come if we had been confined to look upon one side of life alone, even were that side the possessor of all the virtues. How far we profited by our opportunity is a point I will not attempt to determine, but it is certain that to few young men in college is such an opportunity offered as was ours in those rich years.

In 1849 Charles Follen graduated, and he determined to go to Europe for a few years to carry his studies still farther. He was accompanied by his mother and aunt, Miss Cabot. After the departure of his friends, young Gibbs took lodgings in the college yard, but his temperament was unfit for that mode of life, and he could not study in his new surroundings. His health, too, drooped, and he at length decided to leave college for a time and to join his friends in Europe. He went abroad, and met the party in London in the same year, or perhaps early in 1850. During the first year of his absence he kept up certain of his college studies with much diligence, in anticipation of rejoining his class and graduating in due form from Harvard, but he finally determined to remain abroad for another year. In the society of these friends he found many of the most delightful houses in England opened to him, and the opportunity of seeing the most notable people of a time when England, owing to the revolutions going on on the Continent, was rich in distinguished exiles, beside her own wealth in famous men and women. Mrs. Follen's long and intimate friendship with several of the

leaders in the intellectual world of London gave her a right to the hospitality of a society whose iron doors, though obdurate enough in general, turn on softest hinges at the call of such voices as hers. In company with these ladies and his friend Charles Follen, Seymour Gibbs passed two happy years, enjoying to the full, opportunities of seeing the world which were worth far more as education to a youth of his turn of mind than the same time spent in college could have been.

He returned to America in the summer of 1851, and, receiving no encouragement from the business connections of his late father to enter a merchant's office, to which he had looked forward, he decided, after some months of reflection, to take up the study of medicine, though having in reality no inclination for that or any other of the prescribed routines. The things he liked best in this world were study, reading, and the society of his friends, and could he have had these he would have been easily content with the most modest way of living. He was no ascetic, yet he was content and even happy with a little, and all his life set an example of moderation, living at ease and moving without embarrassment in circumstances that would have hampered many other men. Still, it seemed best to his friends and to himself that he should have a part to play, and he chose that of the physician. He went to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1852, and attended lectures in the Pennsylvania Medical College, and graduated in 1856, in which year his diploma is dated.

At the outbreak of the war he suffered very keenly from a sense of his physical inability to take part in

the general uprising ; for though, as I have said, his health had all his life been sound, his constitution was delicate. In March, 1862, when military hospitals were springing up in Philadelphia, he offered himself as an assistant surgeon, and was appointed to the South Street Hospital. But at that time no medical man of his age and education had volunteered for this service, and friends earnestly dissuaded him from his offer by the advice that "he was too good a man for the place." Still he persisted, this seeming to him the duty that lay nearest, and a little later he found no lack of companions of the same education as himself. In fact, so clear was his mind that he could not stand by an idle spectator of the conflict, that it was a great satisfaction to him when the hospital service gave him an opportunity to go forward. He hesitated somewhat, from a fear that he might fail in executive power. The first men who were put under him were not wounded men, but those who had fallen off on the march or in camp. They were without discipline, and often drunk and unruly. The building which was fitted up in South Street to receive these men was not completed when Dr. Gibbs took charge, and on one occasion he had three hundred unruly men under his care for three days and nights before Dr. Neil had leisure to appoint other officers and get the hospital well organized.

After the battle of Gettysburg Dr. Gibbs was transferred to the field-hospital there, where he remained for a few weeks only. From thence he was sent to the Chestnut Hill Hospital in Philadelphia, and was attached to the service of that institution until the close of the war.

From this time until 1870 Dr. Gibbs continued to live in Philadelphia, in the nominal practice of his profession. But though he had been very happy in the hospital service, where his work and his character were highly valued and made him many friends, he could not feel an interest in private practice. I do not know if he hated sick people, as I lately heard one eminent medical man say of himself, but he really had very little sympathy with the thousand and one mild distempers that are so much for the moment to those who think they suffer them, and so little in reality. Boston gossip used to say of her most eminent surgeon that he could not forgive a man who successfully resisted an amputation, and no doubt every medical man likes a "bad case." But the most part of cases are not bad, and our practitioner's benevolence was not large enough to take in the little shivering influenzas and toothaches that rang his bell at night, or pulled at his sleeve when he was deep in study. His private practice had indeed never been sufficient to create an interest in it, and he determined to husband his pecuniary resources by spending some years in Europe, and in May, 1871, in company with his only surviving sister, he sailed for Europe, intending to stop abroad for several years. He did indeed remain until 1879, returning to America in August of that year.

Dr. Gibbs and his sister joined the writer and his wife in Paris, but the time was ill-chosen, for war was in the horizon, and it came all too soon for the happiness we had promised ourselves. We were whirled apart; they to Switzerland, we to Italy, and it was long before the uproar subsided enough for us to

communicate with one another. From Switzerland Dr. Gibbs went down, the next year, to Italy ; but we had already broken up our winter quarters in Florence, and were moving about from one place of interest to another ; and as the chances of travel would have it, we did not meet again till we met at home nine years afterward. After spending four years on the Continent, our friend passed the remainder of the time he was abroad in England and Scotland. His letters, during all this time, were a great source of pleasure and instruction to us at home, making allowance for his almost humorous heat in the advocacy of the French cause in the Franco-Prussian war, or rather, for he was not blind to the fault of the French let me say, his heat in denouncing the Germans, for whom he had but few good words. It was not from ignorance of the Germans that he disliked them ; he had lived much among them, and he had an intimate acquaintance with their language, which he read freely, as well as with their history and their literature. Nor did he carry his feeling farther than the general, but had friends enough among that people, and friendships enough. It was a matter of temperament and sympathy ; and, in spite of a thousand righteous demands made on our admiration by the German people, it must be owned he shared his preference for the French, his delight in their genius, and his enjoyment of their language, with many of his countrymen. I may add that besides his knowledge of the German language, which he wrote and spoke with fluency, he was a very accurate French scholar. Indeed, he had a turn for languages, and while in Italy made a close study of Italian.



So much it has seemed well to say of the personality of the translator, who has given us the following interesting correspondence. Perhaps the sympathetic reader may feel with me, that he has added to our picture-gallery of good women a portrait it would have been a pity to lose. Goethe's mother, seen in the light of these letters, is indeed one of the most cheerful figures in the literary history of the last century. Her warm heart, overflowing with affection for her friends, her motherly worship of her son, and her delight in everything that he did and everything that he wrote, are never tiresome, however often met with. And yet, with all this enthusiasm, we are equally struck with her strong common-sense, her clear perception, and her shrewdness, together with the transparent honesty of her speech. We feel, as we read, how important a part such a woman must have played in the society of her time, a rude society, for all its intellectual splendor, but rude rather by what it lacked than by any positive traits. What the Duchess Amalia was to the little Court of Weimar, and through that to the other aboriginal courts of Germany—

“ not yet appeared  
And struggling to get free their hinder parts.”—

Goethe's mother was to the rich bourgeoisie of Frankfort and to the world of fruitiul but untrained literary society that delighted in her as much for her own sake as for her relation to the greatest German of his time. Even her piety, old-fashioned and orthodox as it seems in these runagate times, has something rich and inspiring about it, and indeed it

is of a higher strain than that piety of Germans and English against which Mr. Matthew Arnold has lifted so irreverent a spear. Frau Rath is in some sort a Homeric woman, a mate for Andromache and Penelope ; to come nearer home, she carries us, as we read, to Shakespeare's world, and we place her in memory's gallery side by side with Volumnia.

---

My thanks are due to the publisher of *Scribner's Monthly*, my good friend, Roswell-Smith, Esq., for his permission to reprint an article on the Goethe House at Frankfort, written by Dr. Gibbs for his magazine, and contained in the number for November, 1875. It is printed as an appendix to the present volume.

An article, consisting of a selection from the letters of Goethe's mother, was prepared by Dr. Gibbs, and printed in *Lippincott's Magazine* for November, 1879. This was also politely placed at my disposal by the publisher of that magazine, together with an electrotype of the portrait of the Frau Rath, which is placed as a frontispiece to this book. The article itself contained nothing but what appears in the present work.

With regard to the spelling of proper names and German words, I hesitated for a while between uniformity, and following the practice of the different letter-writers. Finally I decided for the latter, and I hope the judgment of the reader will go along with me in the matter. The irregular spelling and sometimes risky grammar of the Frau Rath give a per-

sonal flavor to her letters, and help make up their external individuality. As the proofs have been read with care, it is hoped that the reader will not charge to carelessness variations in spelling which are really to be ascribed to the desire of the translator and editor to "follow copy."

CLARENCE COOK.

NEW YORK, 171 West Tenth St.,  
November, 1880.



## INTRODUCTION.

---

CATHARINE ELIZABETH TEXTOR was born at Frankfort-on-the-Main, February the 19th, 1731. Her father's great-grandfather, Wolfgang Weber, had according to the fashion of his time, Latinized the humble name of Weber into Textor. Why, does not appear, unless we accept the reason Oilman, in "Goetz von Berlichingen," gave for changing his name into Olearius: "to avoid," he said, "the inappropriateness of that name on the title-page of my Latin writings." "You did well to translate it," rejoins Liebetaut; "a prophet is without honor in his own country, and it might have fared even so with your name in your native tongue." Olearius: "That was not the cause." Liebetaut: "Everything has two reasons."

It appears from this that in Goethe's youth the Latinizing of proper names was getting to be laughed at, and made a subject for jest and merriment.

Her father was the Councillor, Doctor Johann Wolfgang Textor, later on Chief Magistrate of Frankfort. From him Goethe got his two Christian names, and he gives a graphic picture of him in his Autobiography. He lived in an old house, with a large old-fashioned garden, where he passed much of the time which was not taken up by his duties as magistrate. He attended with his own hand to the culture of the finer fruits and flowers, and grafted the

roses, for which he put on the ancient gloves which were yearly presented to him at the Piper's Court. Goethe says one day like another passed placidly along, and he never remembered to have seen his grandfather angry. The old gentleman was also gifted with prophecy : he saw in dreams what was to happen to himself. When he was junior councillor he dreamed that he should soon be alderman ; and it was not long before an alderman died of apoplexy, and Textor was promoted to the alderman's bench. He also foretold his elevation to the chief magistracy. When a Chief Magistrate died, the election of his successor was always made with as little delay as possible, for fear that the Emperor should assert his former right to appoint this officer. On the occasion when Textor was chosen, a messenger was sent round at midnight to give notice of an extraordinary session, and, as his lantern was going out, he asked for a candle's end. "Give him a whole one," said Textor ; "after all, he has all this trouble on my account." The election was not decided by votes, but by drawing balls from a bag. Each candidate had his representative to draw for him, and their precedence was settled by lot. It so happened, on this occasion, that there were three candidates, and Textor's representative was by the lot made third and last ; but, as luck would have it, the first two drew each a silver ball, leaving the golden one at the bottom of the bag for Textor.

Of the wife of this worthy old gentlemen we know nothing. Her grandson makes no mention of her in his Autobiography, except that she was the confidant of her husband's dreams. Yet, on looking at

her portrait, one finds that in personal appearance her daughter, and especially her grandson, so much resembled her that one cannot help supposing that they must have inherited from her many traits of character. Certainly, neither of them had much of the old Councillor's lake-like placidity, and in his old age the resemblance of Goethe to his grandmother Textor is very striking.

We can readily imagine that the daughter led an uneventful life in this antiquated dwelling, with its peaceful garden, where one day was like another. We know nothing of her until, in her eighteenth year, her hand is asked in marriage by the Imperial Councillor, John Caspar Goethe, whose suit was favorably received by her parents.

Rath Goethe, then in his thirty-ninth year, lived with his mother, the widow of Frederick George Goethe, in a large house in the Hirschgraben. The widow Goethe was wealthy, and had spared no pains on the education of her son, who had taken his degree of Doctor Juris, had travelled in Italy (a distinction in those days), and passed for a man learned in the law, and for a connoisseur in the fine arts.

The sentiments of Fräulein Textor, on leaving her father's house as the wife of Rath Goethe, on the 20th of August, 1748, were probably those of filial duty toward her parents, and of esteem toward the husband of their choice : nothing further was asked or expected of her. The first year of her married life she may be said to have been at school ; for her husband, having no outlet for the knowledge with which he had been crammed, and being of a very didactic turn of mind, seized upon her as a godsend.

and set her all manner of tasks. She was kept busy with languages, composition, and music, and she only escaped from school by becoming a mother.

On the 28th of August, 1749, was born the son, Johann Wolfgang, who was to make her one of the happiest of mothers.

“The bed in which your mother brought you into the world,” writes Bettina to Goethe (the *translation*, too, is hers), “had blue checkered hangings. She was then seventeen\* years old, and one year married; hereupon she remarked you would always remain young, and your heart would never become old, since you had the youth of your mother into the bargain. Three days did you consider about it before you entered the world, and caused your mother heavy hours. Through anger that necessity had driven you from your nature-home, and through the ill-treatment of the midwife, you appeared quite black, and without sign of life. They laid you in a butcher’s tray, and bathed the pit of your heart with wine, quite despairing of your existence. Your grandmother stood behind the bed. When you first opened your eyes, she exclaimed, ‘*Daughter, he lives!*’ ‘*Then awoke my maternal heart, and lived since then in continual enthusiasm to this very hour,*’ said your mother to me in her seventy-seventh year.”

Several children, born later, died in infancy, with the exception of the daughter Cornelia. She and Wolfgang grew up together, and their mother with them; for the difference in age between herself and her husband brought her nearer to the children, and

---

\* Eighteen.



she was fond of saying, "My Wolfgang and I have always held together, and the reason is we were both young, and not so far from each other as Wolfgang and his father." She stood between the children and an affectionate yet stern and exacting father, and in this difficult position her true education may be said to have begun. She was the mediator and peace-maker, for which office she was especially fitted by her tact and "mother wit," her animal spirits, and her cheerful views. She possessed thoroughly, as her son said, and as may be seen everywhere in her letters, "the philosophy of a cheerful life."

"Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur  
Des Lebens ernstes Führen;  
Von Mütterchen die Frohnatur  
Die Lust zu fabuliren."

Thus wrote Goethe of himself—that is, his stature and the earnest conduct of life he got from his father; from dear little mother his joyous disposition and love of story-telling. His mother was an admirable story-teller. To this poetic gift of hers we shall find constant allusion in the following correspondence; for instance, where Klinger tells of how he was "nailed to his chair" when listening to her; and in many other places which we will not anticipate. While the father gave his attention to the serious training of his boy's intellect, the mother cultivated his imagination and poetic feeling by the creations of her fancy. "In general," says Vichoff,\* "all the freshness, the wit and the humor we find in Goethe, all the depth of feeling and the poetry, were fore-

---

\* Vichoff: "Goethe's Leben."

shadowed in his mother's character ; while from his father he had received only a few traits of character of a coarser kind, if I may so speak—for example, his strong love of order, his administrative talent, and the gravity he displayed in his later years."

Rath Goethe was, at first, very much disappointed at the course of life his son chose. He had carefully educated him for the law, and when he returned from the University of Strasburg with a diploma as Doctor Juris, his father thought the fulfilment of all his hopes was at hand. With a secretary for the manual part of the work, the father and son to put their heads together over the knotty points of the law, and with their intimate relations with the magistracy of Frankfort to put them in the way of business, Rath Goethe saw his way to great success.

But what born poet was ever made into an attorney? The result soon was that the two silent partners had to look after the legal business, while the young attorney was writing "Goetz von Berlichingen," falling in love at Wetzlar with Lotte Buff, and immortalizing it in the "Sorrows of Werther"; in short, was becoming all at once not only a famous and popular writer, but an epoch-maker in the literature of his country. Rath Goethe was very proud of his son's success, but it distressed him to see him putting literature before law.

It was the Storm and Stress period with Goethe. He wandered with his susceptible heart from Lotte to Maximiliane Brentano; from the pretty Max to Lili Schönemann. He speaks of it afterward, in a letter to his mother, as a time of confusion and perplexity.

To distract the young jurist still further, his newly-won fame brought visitors from every quarter to see the last literary lion ; at length, among them, came the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, whose visit was followed by an invitation, which resulted in Goethe's going to Weimar to become to the Duke, councillor, minister, and bosom friend.

His father in vain opposed his departure, seeking out all imaginable proverbs and pithy sayings against court-life, to which the son would reply by as many in its favor. There was a brisk warfare of witty epigrams, but each one remained firm in his own opinion.

The disappointment of the father was not shared by the mother : there was no wavering in her faith. Ah ! of the many mothers who have believed their sons to have genius, how few have found that happy realization which fell to the lot of Frau Rath Goethe !

It is at this point that the following Correspondence begins, with the exception of the first two letters, to which we shall refer farther on. In the early letters the mother imparts to Goethe's various youthful friends the intelligence which she receives from Weimar ; then the interest of the Weimar circle in Goethe is extended to his mother. Wieland and the Duchess Amalia write to her, visit her, and vie with each other in their enthusiasm about her ; the odd little maid of honor, von Göchhausen, is delighted to be on the same planet with her, and so on. But we leave the letters to tell their own story.

The first two letters in the chronological order are to Lavater, and are important only as showing the

deep impression made by Lavater on Goethe's mother—an impression which did not widely differ from that everywhere produced by this singular personage. Tall, easy, graceful, pale, with moonshine in his face (as one of his admirers expressed it), a large nose, and brilliant eyes, his friend Hegner applies to him the description of Fénelon by the Duc de St. Simon :

“ Le prélat était un grand homme maigre, bien fait, pâle, avec un grand nez, des yeux dont le feu et l'esprit sortaient comme un torrent, et une physionomie telle que je n'en ai point vue qui y ressemblât, et qui ne se pouvait oublier, quand on ne l'aurait vue qu'une fois. Elle avait de la gravité et de la galanterie, du sérieux et de la gaîté.”

In the history of his time Lavater has two parts to play : the one as the author of the “ Fragments of Physiognomy,” the other as a pastor and earnest propagator of extreme evangelical doctrines, running into mysticism. The interest excited by his “ Fragments of Physiognomy,” joined to the winning personality of its author, brought him into relations with all the thinkers of his day. But as the “ Fragments of Physiognomy” remained always fragments, and even the author himself became at last aware that he was incapable of fulfilling his oft-repeated promise of evolving from them a systematic philosophy, the interest in Lavater died out, except among those who sympathized with his religious opinions.

The second letter was written while Goethe had gone with the Counts Stolberg to Switzerland, and in it Goethe's mother gives herself the title of *Frau*

*Aja*, which she so heartily accepted, and by which she was known in her circle of friends.

In regard to her titles, that of *Frau Rath* is the only one by which she is universally known in Germany. *Frau Rath* or *Frau Rätthin*, for the usage varies, is the title of a councillor's wife ; in literal English it would be Mrs. Councillor. Now there is no lack of councillors' wives in Germany, but *Frau Rath Goethe* has impressed her bright image so strongly upon the history of German literature that in speaking of her no surname is required : she is the *Frau Rath par excellence* in the heart of every cultivated German.

The two Counts Stolberg belonged to the phenomena of the period—young men of rank and fortune bursting with hatred for tyrants, and boiling over with enthusiasm for freedom. But the tyranny they hated was only the tyranny of custom and convention, and the freedom they thirsted for was the freedom to follow what they called the dictates of Nature. If Nature suggested that it was desirable to bathe by the wayside, in broad daylight, they eagerly followed her dictates, and they inveighed all the more loudly against tyrants when certain rude minions of conventionalism assailed them with stones and drove them ignominiously away.

Some years after this the Stolbergs went over to the Romish Church—a simple instance ; it would seem, of the well-known law, that the farther the pendulum is swung in one direction the farther it will swing in the other ; yet this circumstance created in Germany an excitement which at the present distance in time seems a veritable tempest in a teapot.

Of the Stolbergs' visit Goethe says: "We had dined together but a few times before, enjoying one bottle after another, the poetical hatred of tyrants made its appearance, and there was manifested a thirst for the blood of such villains. My father smilingly shook his head; my mother had scarcely in her life heard of tyrants; however, she called to mind having seen such monsters represented among the copperplates in Gottfried's Chronicles—for example, King Cambyses triumphing in the father's presence at having hit the son's heart with his arrow: this had still remained in her memory. To turn these and similar expressions, which were becoming continually more violent, back to something more cheerful, she betook herself to the cellar, where were deposited large well-cared-for tuns of the oldest wines. There were to be found there the vintages of 1706-19-28-48, which she had herself watched and tended, and which were but seldom broached except on solemn and important occasions. As she now set out the high-colored wine in a cut-glass decanter, she exclaimed, 'Here is the true tyrants' blood! Rejoice yourselves in it; but banish all murderous thoughts from my house.'"

This scene is so similar to one in the "Legend of the Four Children of Aymon," that it gives the clew to the Frau Rath's title, *Frau Aja*. The original Frau Aja was, according to the legend, the sister of the Emperor Charlemagne, a personage whose deep impress upon his times is shown by the part he plays in so many legends. Frau Aja was the wife of Count Aymon, and the mother of four sons. One of the sons kills in a quarrel the son of the Emperor, and

flies with his three brothers to the forest of Ardennes. The Emperor pursues them in vain, but takes Aymon prisoner, and compels him to an oath to deliver up his sons, should they fall into his hands. After many adventures and many years' absence, the four brothers are seized with a desire to revisit their home, but are afraid to present themselves, on account of their father's oath. They therefore compel some pilgrims they meet to change clothes with them, and, appearing before the castle gate as pilgrims returning from Rome, beg for shelter and food. Frau Aja says, "Be content and of good cheer and I will give it you," and seated them at a table and gave them to eat and to drink. So they ate and drank and made merry; at last Frau Aja went into the cellar, and, bringing up some of the best wine, poured out a silver cup full and gave it to Reinold. In the end the mother recognizes them, and so on; but with the rest of the legend we have nothing to do: it is only the similarity of this scene with the action of the Frau Rath in bringing the wine from the cellar which here concerns us. No doubt it recalled so vividly the scene in the legend, very well known in Germany, that the joyous group hailed her at once as Frau Aja.\*

---

\* Compare Düntzer: "Frauenbilder," page 456, and following.





## INDEX TO LETTERS.

---

### FROM THE FRAU RATH TO

Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar—Nos. 25, 42, 45, 46, 53.

Rath Crespel—Nos. 7, 8.

Goethe—Nos. 69, 104, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115,  
117, 118, 123, 124, 125, 126, 128, 131, 132.

Goethe's Son, Augustus—No. 129.

Fräulein von Göchhausen—No. 15.

To her Grandchildren—Nos. 66, 88, 99.

Lavater—Nos. 1, 2, 9, 10, 16, 17, 24, 38, 43, 68.

Merck—No. 44.

Salzmann—No. 5.

Louisa Schlosser, afterward Nicolovius—Nos. 90, 96, 97, 102,  
103, 105, 106, 107.

Schönborn—No. 4.

Frau von Stein—Nos. 63, 71.

Friedrich von Stein—Nos. 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 62,  
64, 65, 67, 70, 72, 73, 87, 91, 92, 94, 95.

Unzelmann—Nos. 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85,  
86, 89, 93, 100.

Christiane Vulpius, afterward Goethe's wife—Nos. 116, 122,  
127, 130.

Wieland—No. 21.

## TO THE FRAU RATH FROM

Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar—Nos. 20, 27, 35, 36,  
39, 41, 49.

August, Prince of Saxe-Gotha—No. 101.

Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar—Nos. 32, 34.

Duke George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz—No. 121.

Goethe—Nos. 30, 31, 37, 61, 98, 120, and p. 141.

Fräulein von Göchhausen—Nos. 19, 26, 28, 40.

Klinger—No. 119.

Friedrich von Stein—No. 60.

Wieland—Nos. 6, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 22, 33, and p. 84.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar to J. H. Merck—No. 29  
and p. 69.

Goethe to Friedrich von Stein—Nos. 58, 59.

Goethe's Father to Schönborn—No. 4.

Klinger to Kayser—No. 3.

Merck to Wieland—No. 21.

Merck to his Wife—p. 75.

Wieland to Gleim—p. 68.

Wieland to Merck—No. 23 and pp. 85, 100.

GOETHE'S MOTHER.



# LETTERS FROM THE FRAU RATH.

---

## 1. *Frau Rath to John Caspar Lavater.*

TUESDAY, the 2d Aug., 1774.

A thousand thanks, once more, dear, good son, for your stay with us. I could not take leave ; my heart was too full. Never, never shall I lose your image from my heart. Farewell. God Almighty bless you, accompany you in all your ways, and bring you sound and well to your destination. Oh, do not forget us, dear, dear Lavater. I must leave off, and must weep \*—my house is so lonely to me, as quiet as the grave. Once more, farewell.

CATHARINA ELISABETHA GOETHE.

## 2. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 28 June (1775).

Here is the promised music ; may it give you much pleasure. You will have received my letter of the 26th, † and I await eagerly a reply.

Greet the Counts and the dear Baron, ‡ and say I have trusted my Wolfgang to them, and thank them for all the love they have shown toward him ;

---

\* The reader will call to mind that facility for shedding tears, which was a characteristic of the eighteenth century.

† Missing.

‡ Counts Stolberg and Baron Haugwitz.

yet I now beg them to send him back to us, for time hangs very heavily on Frau Aja. Many greetings from us to all friends. Vale.

3. *Portion of a Letter from Klinger to Kayser.\**

GIESSEN, 2d Whitsuntide Holiday (27 May, 1776).

. . . Yesterday I had a letter from Goethe's dear mother, from whom I often learn something about Goethe; and I cannot forbear telling thee in a few lines what the good woman writes. Here are her own words! I believe it will impress thee anew, as many hundred times as thou mayest have heard it.

“The Doctor is delighted and well in his Weimar; has moved to a charming garden, belonging to the Duke, just outside the town. Lenz has written a poetic description of it, and sent it to me to read. The poet (Lenz) also sticks there as if he were nailed to the spot. Weimar must be a difficult place to get away from: everybody stays there. Well, if it pleases the little flock, may God bless it to them. Now, dear friend, farewell, as well as it admits of in Giessen. I always think to you poets it would be a trifle to idealize even the worst places. If you can make something out of nothing, the evil one must be in it, † if a fairy town were not to be made

---

\* Philip Christopher Kayser, son of an organist at Frankfort, established himself as a musician at Zürich. He wrote an overture to Egmont, and the music to some of Goethe's operatic trifles.

†. “So müsst es doch mit dem Sei-bei-uns zugehen.” Sei-bei-uns or Gott sei-bei-uns (God be with us), from being used as a phrase to arrest the evil one, came, by circumlocution, to mean the evil one himself.

out of Giessen. In such things, I, at least, have great power. A thousand pities that I do not write dramas—the world would see amazing wonders ; but they would have to be in prose. I am no great lover of verse-making, which, truly, has its reasons. The political pewterer had the very same hatred of the Latin language.\*

“Greet Schleirm(acher)† from us, and tell him he must not let you come here to the next fair alone, and then, as a matter of course, we see you and him, pass many an hour in chat, relate all sorts of pretty stories, and so on.”

I leave out much more, which concerns my authorship, etc. I thought it would give thee pleasure, and thou will'st keep it secret. Thou dost not imagine what a woman she is, and what I possess in her. How many hours of intimacy have I passed with her, nailed to my chair, listening to stories—I cannot write thee about it. . . . K.

---

Klinger and Lenz, two friends of Goethe's youth, followed him to Weimar, as meteors are drawn by the planet within whose influence they come. Lenz, who, when he was not actually treated as insane, was always hovering on the borders of insanity, “played regularly every day some foolish trick” (as Wieland said), “and then wondered over it as a goose that

---

\* *i.e.* Because he was ignorant of it. The allusion is to “*Der politische Kannengiesser*,” a very popular farce of the day, by Holberg, a Danish author, translated into German by Oehlenschläger.

† A college friend of Klinger.

has laid an egg." In the end, he gave such serious offence as to make his further stay impossible.

Klinger's stay was short. A certain proud self-assertion and unbending angularity, which had been heightened by his constant struggle with poverty, unfitted him for the Weimar circle. He undertook the direction of a theatre at Leipzig, then served as a lieutenant in the Austrian service, during the war of the Bavarian succession—a war of short duration—after which his friends applied to Dr. Franklin in the hope of getting him a commission in the American army in the War of Independence. This application was unsuccessful, and Klinger eventually went to Russia, where his sterling qualities found at length an appropriate sphere of action. He was appointed reader to the Grand Duke Paul, and as everything was on a military basis, received the rank of lieutenant in the marine battalion. He accompanied this prince on a journey of fourteen months to Switzerland, Italy, and France. During this journey they visited the Duke of Würtemberg, and the illuminations in honor of the Grand Duke served at the same time to light young Doctor Schiller in his flight from a country where he was forbidden to use his pen except in writing prescriptions.

There are many romantic incidents in Klinger's life. He was the son of a wood-sawyer, and his mother was a laundress, combining with this a little shop for wood and coals. One day, when he was assisting his father in the delivery of a load of wood, his beauty of person and his bright glances attracted the attention of the director of the grammar-school. Struck with the intelligent replies to his questions, the director



procured his admission to the grammar-school, and provided for his education.

When Klinger revisited Frankfort with the Grand Duke Paul, he dressed himself in the full uniform of his military rank, and presented himself in his mother's humble shop. But he could not persuade his mother, now a widow, to share his fortunes ; she would only consent to accept a modest pension, with the condition that she might continue her small commerce in fuel.

On his return to Russia, Klinger married a lady of rank, and was made Curator of the University of Dorpat, with the rank of lieutenant-general. He died at St. Petersburg in 1831, in his seventy-seventh year.

Falk \* gives the following anecdote of Klinger as related to him by a friend :

“ One morning Klinger went to Goethe, took a large parcel of manuscript out of his pocket, and began to read aloud. Goethe bore it for a time ; but at length, exclaiming, ‘ What cursed stuff is this thou hast again been writing ? The devil may bear it if he can ! ’ he sprang from his seat and ran away. This, however, did not in the least disconcert Klinger, nor disturb his equanimity. He rose quietly, put his manuscript in his pocket, and merely said, ‘ Curious : this is the second person with whom this has happened to me to-day. ’ Wieland declared that if it had been his case, he should have found it difficult to preserve such composure. Goethe tranquilly

---

\* “ Goethe Portrayed from Familiar Personal Intercourse.”  
Translated by Sarah Austin in her “ Characteristics of Goethe.”

replied, ' So should I ; but you can see from it that Klinger was born out and out for a general, because he has such confounded assurance. I predicted it to you in those very days.' "

Klinger first attracted attention by his play *The Twins* (*Die Zwillinge*). A prize had been offered for an original drama, and Klinger won it with this fiery production. This play, with the *Sturm und Drang* (*Storm and Stress*)—which gave a name to the literary epoch—roused all passions, and both rank among the forerunners of the romantic school. Klinger was all his life a voluminous writer, but he abandoned the drama for essays and novels. At the close of life he expressed his obligations to Goethe and George Schlosser for the advice he often received from them.

A high moral tone ; a spirit busied with high and noble thoughts ; a vigorous, manly intellect and character ; simple habits ; enjoyment in a moderate way of living ; perfect ignorance of the passion for happiness-hunting—who had ever thought of requiring these qualities in a poet ? In his " Observations and Thoughts on Various Subjects Connected with the World and Literature,"\* he explains how such a theory arose in his mind ; how, first, the actual world presented itself to his mind's eye only through a poetic veil—this is the Storm and Stress period—then how the poetic world was shaken to its foundations by the actual one ; and how, at last, it gained the victory, because the self-sustained moral sense

---

\* " Betrachtungen und Gedanken über verschiedene Gegenstände der Welt und Literatur."

diffused light through the darkness which threatened to enshroud the poet's mind.

These views he also expressed in a series of novels, of which the "Man of the World and the Poet" is considered the best.\*

There is a tradition that Klinger was born in a part of Goethe's father's house. Dr. Otto Volger, who has in late years investigated, with German assiduity, the history of that house, denies that there are any associations with Klinger. Goethe, however, accepted the tradition, and embalmed it in verse. A few years before his death he sent Klinger a sketch of the house, accompanied by a short poem. He reminds Klinger that he had taken the wanderer's staff and gone into a far country and attained a lofty position. "From this goal, will it not please you to look back to your first step? from the same threshold we set forth on very different paths.

Eine Schwelle hiess in's Leben,  
Uns verschiedne Wege gehn;  
War es doch zu edlem Streben  
Drum auf frohes Wiedersehn."

4. *Goethe's Parents to Schönborn, Secretary to the Danish Consulate at Algiers.*

FRANKFORT-ON-MAIN, 24th July, 1776.

Your friendly letter to our son, dated Algiers, the 28th October, 1775, containing in particular a succinct account of the Spanish *coup manqué*, duly reached here about six weeks after, and it is not his fault

---

\* Mrs. Austin, "Characteristics of Goethe."

that it has, until now, remained unanswered. He had already left us, and we had to send it after him to Weimar, where he still is. I must tell you how all this came to pass, as everything, estimable friend, which concerns this singular being \* must be of interest to you. I begin at the origin of his present relations. The Duke of Weimar became acquainted with him two years ago, and was so favorably impressed that, when the Duke returned to Frankfort from Durlach, where he had married the Princess Louise of Darmstadt, our son was formally invited to Weimar by this young ducal pair, whither he soon after followed them. He remained there last winter, as guest, and entertained the Court by reading to them his unprinted works, introduced skating and other agreeable pursuits, by which he made them his friends, as well as many exalted and distinguished persons in the neighborhood. But the better acquainted the Duke became with the Doctor, the less could he spare him. He tested his capabilities, which he found of such a nature that he at length appointed him Geheim Legations Rath (Privy Councillor) with a seat and vote in the Privy Council, and a salary of 1200 thalers. There, now, sits the poet, and accommodates himself the best way he can to his position. There let him sit ; and we, on account of his official occupations, will replace and represent him in this correspondence. You shall learn further details about him, and also receive his minor writings, old friend ; of which with the inclosed we make a beginning. One thing more : as the Duke of

---

\* " Diesen singularen Menschen."

Weimar not only values intelligent men, but also rewards them according to their merit, his capital must soon be a meeting-place for many men of talent; for instance, one of the Counts Stolberg has been made Chamberlain, and will soon repair thither.\* Herder appears as General Superintendent,† and Lenz has already been there several months. But what will most astonish you is that the Doctor is reconciled with Wieland, and lives with him on the friendliest footing; and this comes from his heart. As to what concerns Hofr. (Court Councillor) Schlosser ‡ in Emmendingen, he is over head and ears in publications, some portions of which do not please in the least the dogmatic theologians; so that those black men with white collars found the second part of his village catechism not in accordance with their dogmatic way of thinking, and therefore stirred up the secular arm to confiscate it. He has recently brought out his "Anti-Pope." §

. . . *Hactenus Goethe Pater.*

Dear good friend! you must also have a little word from me; you must learn, too, that I am still living, think oft, oft of you; always would be glad to know what our friend Schönborn is about in Algiers, etc. You doubtless remember that nearly three years have flown by since we were so happy, eating grapes together. It seems to me you have been long enough in Barbary, have seen enough veiled people; and

---

\* Stolberg was dissuaded from going by Klopstock. See the singular correspondence in Lewes' "Life of Goethe."

† A high dignitary in the Lutheran Church.

‡ The husband of his daughter Cornelia.

§ Anti-Pope. A reply to the Essay on Man.

therefore my advice, which my friendly heart gives you, is this, that you soon come back to us. It was always my delight to have distinguished men with and about me ;\* but in my present situation (since both my children are far, far distant from me) it is a heavenly pleasure. Take my advice and come, the sooner the better ; it will be good for you. What shall we not have to relate to each other : we need not fear dulness. I possess a store of anecdotes, stories, etc., so that I will be bound to talk eight days continuously, and when you, too, begin—about lakes and seas, cities and villages, men and monsters, elephants and snakes—that will be a *gaudium*. Farewell, wishes you, your very particular friend,  
C. E. GOETHE.

---

The difficulty with Wieland alluded to, if there ever was any, is certainly here much exaggerated. Goethe had written, one Sunday afternoon, over a bottle of Burgundy, a farce to which he gave the title *Götter, Helden und Wieland* (*Gods, Heroes and Wieland*). The farce was directed against what he considered Wieland's unworthy vulgarization of the Grecian gods and heroes. Wieland wrote the following good-natured notice of it for his monthly paper, the *Deutsche Mercur*.

“ Dr. Goethe, the author of this little work, after having shown us in his *Goetz von Berlichingen*

---

\* “ Es war für mich jederzeit eine Wollust grosse Menschen um und bey mir zu haben.”

(“ Es ist eine Wollust einen grossen Mann zu sehen.” Brother Martin in *Goetz von Berlichingen*.)

that he might be Shakespeare if he wished, has proved to us in this heroic-farcical pasquinade that if he wished, he might also be Aristophanes. For just as it has pleased him in this critical Worexekek Koax Koax to make sport of Wieland and Wieland's *Alceste*, so did Aristophanes with this self-same Euripides, whom Herr Goethe here makes walk over the head of the author of the opera *Alceste*. We recommend this little book to all admirers of the pasquinade style as a masterpiece of *persiflage* and sophisticated wit, which, out of all possible points of view, carefully chooses that one from which the object must appear crooked, and then makes itself right heartily merry because the thing is so crooked."

Goethe, after reading the above, wrote to Frau von La Roche, "He treats the matter like a good fellow, who feels that he sits firm in the saddle. I have never had anything against him, and now I forgive him for his blasphemy against my gods."

##### 5. *Frau Rath to Salzmann.\**

We heard yesterday a great deal that is pleasant and good from our son. I am convinced that you will rejoice in our joys; you, so old a friend and acquaintance of the Doctor, must take a deep interest in his good fortune, and can, as a friend of man, feel, when the Psalmist says, "Wohl dem der Freude an seinen Kindern erlebt!" (Blessed is he who lives to have joy in his children), † how grateful

---

\* A Strassburg friend of Goethe's.

† The sentence "Wohl dem der Freude an seinen Kindern erlebt," is inscribed on the Sophienducaten, gold ducats struck in

all this must be to his parents. God guide him further, and cause him to accomplish much good in the land of Weimar! I am sure, you will say, with us, Amen.

6. *Christopher Martin Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAR MOTHER AJA: It gave me great pleasure to get once more a note from your dear hand. Brother Merlin,\* the conjurer, or his faithful shield-bearer and confidential secretary † will in the meantime have informed you how he is. They have all returned safely, and improved, as I think, in soul and body, from Dessau, where a prince and princess are to be seen from whom no one who has been with them willingly parts.

It is the greatest kindness of you, dearest mother, and of aunt ‡ that you should interest yourselves so much for that milk-soppy fellow, Gandalin. But since for once this is the case, I should be glad to hear how the end of the song in the last book pleased you, and if you are now content (since from the way in which you made known to me your apprehension,

---

1616, by the order of the Electress Sophia of Saxony, on the birth of her grandson. These coins are much sought after as presents at christenings, on account of the appropriateness of the motto. The Frau Rath falls into a common error in attributing it to the Psalmist. The nearest passage corresponding to it is in the Apocrypha, Ecclesiasticus 3: 6. "Wer seinen Vater ehrt, der wird auch Freude an seinen Kindern haben;" in the English version, "He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children."

\* Goethe.

† Philip Seidel, a servant Goethe took with him from his father's house, and who remained with him all his life.

‡ Johanna Fahlmer. See note at the end of this letter.



that the young fellow might, in the VIIIth book, become unfaithful, one might almost conclude that the dénouement was by you quite unforeseen) this would, justly give me great pleasure.

The new year 1777 we shall begin a little song in entirely another strain from all we have ever sung to you or played on the lyre. My heart predicts to me, dear Frau Aja, that this will please you more than Herr Gandalin, who, indeed, seen by daylight, is nothing more than a Carnival Knight.

I was glad to hear that Lenz had paid you a visit, and had said of us much that was agreeable and good, which, indeed, he might do with a good conscience. This whimsical dreamer vanished from here in the same way in which he appeared. I did not even know where he went or whence he came.

Liebes Mütterchen, if it does not give you too much trouble, write me in the closest confidence how my cousin Max La Roche is, and how it fares with her. *Item*, what clever people among you say to "All-will's Papers?"\* The author you doubtless know. Brother Wolf† and I find no further fault with it, than that Brother Fritz has not had grace from God to make a *composition* out of the excellent material which he had before him. If one hints to the queer fellow anything of this kind, he does not understand in the least what is said to him; he is, namely, of the opinion that the thing really is a *composition*—that is just the comical part of the matter. Meantime, as it is, it seems to me always like a whole tableful of boxes and jars mixed up together, in all of which

---

\* By Fritz Jacobi.

† Goethe. Wolf, for Wolfgang.

there is something one is glad to have, and can make use of—ribbons, laces, comfits, bonbons, rhubarb, cure-all pills, pomegranate-rinds, soap-balls, cobblers' wax, and God knows what all. I see well that the simile does not fit, for it is true there are excellent things in "Allwill's Papers," and his style of writing, his form of expression (setting aside the inequalities) is for the most part so vivid and brilliant, often so forcible and ardent and full of soul, that there is nothing superior to it. . . .

Now this is, once more, what is called old man's gossip! Ade,\* dear, best mother. I shall soon be no longer able to hold out until the time when I shall see you face to face. Only I dread, in anticipation, the parting. Ah! why cannot we all be together? yet the time will come. Meanwhile keep for me, ever, a good, warm little place in your motherly heart. May you be well, hearty, and happy together in the year 1777.

On the last day of 1776.

Your faithful son,

WIELAND.

---

One of the first of the Weimar circle to take pen in hand to greet the mother of his friend was Wieland, then near the zenith of his fame, but destined to be relegated to the second rank in comparison with Goethe. Wieland is a rare instance of a poet who could contentedly submit to be outrivalled. "Goethe et le jeune duc," writes Bossert, "tom-

---

\* Adieu.

bèrent d'abord comme deux trouble-fête dans le groupe élégant et doux, au milieu duquel trônait le vieux Wieland." \* Yet in March, 1776, we find Wieland writing to Merck: "For me there is no life more without this wonderful boy, whom I love as my sole and only-begotten son, and, as befits an actual father, have a heartfelt joy that he is growing so finely over my head, and is all that which I have not been able to be."

Wieland seems early to have extended his admiration for the son to the mother; as we find, in this the earliest letter which has been published, allusions to previous ones, and the Frau Rath already greeted as his "dear mother Aja."

The aunt (Tante), who is frequently alluded to by this title in the correspondence, is Johanna Fahlmer, a relative by marriage of the brothers Jacobi of Düsseldorf.

"Mademoiselle Fahlmer" (Goethe writes), "who had come to Frankfort from Düsseldorf, and who was intimate with their (Jacobis') circle, by the great tenderness of her sympathies and the uncommon cultivation of her mind, furnished an evidence of the worth of the society in which she had grown up. She gradually put us to shame by her patience with our harsh upper-German manners, and taught us forbearance by letting us feel that we ourselves stood in need of it." (Autobiography.)

At a time when French was almost exclusively the language of the upper classes in Germany, Wieland had the great merit of showing that the despised mother-

---

\* "Cours de littérature Allemande, Goethe et Schiller."

tongue was susceptible of ease, grace, and beauty. He had thus become the fashionable poet of the day ; but the task was a rude one, and in his letters he evidently unbends with delight from the toil of the polisher. In an easy-going, slipshod manner he rattles on in the first words that occur to him, confusing idioms and mingling languages until one seeks in vain to discover whether it is his French that is most Teutonic, or his German most Gallic.

7. *Frau Rath to Crespel.*

FRANKFORT, 5th January, 1777.

DEAR SON : . . . I hope you will not take ill the trouble the affair gives you ; you shall in return for it sit at the round table, and upon your head a whole horn of good things shall be poured out. Yesterday would have been a great pleasure to you. A thousand pities that you are sitting in Ratisbon. 8 young maidens were with me : two Demoiselles Clermond, the Mingen Stark, etc. We played " Stirbt der Fuchs, so gilt sein Balg," and that brought forfeits and made much merriment. Then, there were stories told, and riddles given ; in one word, there was great fun. I delivered correctly your greetings to Max,\* Aunt, and the Gerocks. They, each and all, love and value you, and wished that you were back again. To a certain Peter,† only, your absence is a great comfort. He is altogether an odd stick ; ‡ before Max gets into the new house, he

---

\* Max is Maximiliane La Roche, married to Peter Anton Brentano ; among their children was Bettina.

† Peter Brentano.

‡ Ein wunderlicher Heiliger !

will probably lead her many a dance. There is nothing new here in God's world, except that a great snow has fallen, and many people are sleighing. Farewell, dear friend. Keep us in good remembrance, and be assured that we all, and I especially am and will be your true friend and faithful mother,

C. E. GOETHE.

---

Rath Bernhard Crespel was the son of a jeweller in Frankfort who had many business relations with princes. The Prince of Thurn and Taxis, out of compliment to the father, bestowed upon the babe in his cradle the title of "Rath," almost as if in mockery of this much-loved title. Crespel is not mentioned by name in Goethe's Autobiography, but is well known as that one of the group of youthful friends who devised the sort of marriage lottery described in the sixth book, and again in the sixteenth. Crespel's ready tongue, his conventual education, and his premature baldness gave color to Goethe likening him to a Capuchin friar. He became a complete oddity, made his own shoes and clothes, built a queer house near Frankfort, and had the ill-luck to be the subject of one of Hoffmann's witty sketches.

But at the moment of which we are speaking Crespel was in Ratisbon, and the Frau Rath was writing to him to give him the news of the youthful circle, and to comfort him amid the rebuffs which his oddities had probably drawn upon him.

The Frau Rath gathered about her every Saturday a group of young girls, and entered heartily

into all their diversions. The game of "Stirbt der Fuchs so gilt sein Balg" (When the fox dies, his skin counts) is the one known as "Jack's Alight." The players stand in a circle and pass a lighted stick around, and the one in whose hand it goes out has to redeem the fox's skin by paying a forfeit. There are some charming verses of Goethe's under this title, and in reply to an inquiry from Zelter, Goethe gives the following as the couplets which each one was obliged to repeat while holding the lighted stick in his hand :

Stirbt der Fuchs so gilt der Balg,  
 Lebt er lang, so wird er alt,  
     Lebt er, so lebt er,  
     Stirbt er, so stirbt er,  
 Man begräbt ihn nicht mit der Haut,  
 Das gereicht ihm zur Ehre.

When the Fox dies, his skin counts,  
 If he lives long he will be old ;  
     If he lives, he lives,  
     If he dies, he dies ;  
 He will not be buried in his skin,  
 And this is an honor to him.

We add Goethe's song, with Browning's translation :

Nach Mittage sassen wir  
 Junges Volk im Kühlen ;  
 Amor kam, und *stirbt der Fuchs*  
 Wollt er mit uns spielen.

Jeder meiner Freunde sass  
 Froh bei seinem Herzchen ;  
 Amor blies die Fackel aus,  
 Sprach : hier ist das Kerzchen !

Und die Fackel, wie sie glomm,  
Lies man eilig wandern  
Jeder drückte sie geschwind  
In die Hand des andern.

Und mir reichte Dorilis  
Sie mit Spott und Scherze :  
Kaum berührt mein Finger sie,  
Hell entflammt die Kerze.

Sengt mir Augen und Gesicht,  
Setz die Brust in Flammen,  
Über meinem Haupte schlug  
Fast die Gluth zusammen.

Löschen wollt' ich, patschte zu ;  
Doch es brennt beständig ;  
Statt zu sterben ward der Fuchs  
Recht bei mir lebendig.

When the Fox dies, his skin counts ;  
We young people in the shade  
Sat one sultry day ;  
Cupid came, and "Dies the Fox"  
With us sought to play.

Each one of my friends then sat  
By his mistress dear ;  
Cupid, blowing out the torch,  
Said, "The taper's here" !

Then we quickly sent around  
The expiring brand ;  
Each one put it hastily  
In his neighbor's hand.

Dorilis then gave it me,  
With a scoffing jest ;  
Sudden into flame it broke,  
By my fingers press'd.

And it singed my eyes and face,  
Set my breast on fire ;  
Then above my head the blaze  
Mounted ever higher.

Vain I sought to put it out ;  
 Ever burned the flame ;  
 'Stead of dying, soon the Fox  
 Livelier still became.

Mrs. Austin, in her "Characteristics of Goethe," gives a portion of a letter, evidently from one of the members of this Saturday circle. The writer says: "To the characteristics of Goethe's extraordinary mother, I should add that she had a singular art of stimulating young and active minds, and that out of the treasures of her own experience she instructed them in the science of life. How did we hang on her lips, when in her joyous yet earnest manner she related to us, then girls of twelve or fourteen, a story of Musæus or Wieland, or recited a poem by her son!"

"She was worthy of life" (Sie war des Lebens werth), said her great son to me in the year 1814, when he revisited his paternal city. How intense was her attachment to her friends; how efficient a mediator and helper; how faithful and discreet a confidant was she! She used to say, "Don't lose your presence of mind because the wind blows roughly;" and think of Wieland's words, "Die Hand die uns durch dieses Dunkel führt" (The hand that leads us through this darkness).

#### 8. *Frau Rath to Crespel.*

FRANKFORT, the 1st Febr., 1777.

DEAR SON: In *one* respect your letter gave me great joy and delight; for everything which comes from you, my dear friend, gives me pleasure. But,



for God's sake, tell me what melancholy tone is this which gives your letter the air of the prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations. Toward Ratisbon I shall now my life long have an irreconcilable hatred : it must be an unmannerly place where they can grieve our dear, good Crespel, and mistake his excellent character. A bar of gold of forty pounds without any stamp is, after all, more valuable than a quarter ducat piece, be the latter ever so finely stamped and deemed current by Jews and Christians. Merit remains merit, and will be felt and prized by all upright people ; about the praise or blame of the rest, the silken varlets,\* an honest fellow need not trouble himself. Think of all your brother the Doctor has had to fight through—what idle talk, gossip, lies, etc.—just because people couldn't conceive how anybody, without being of the nobility, could have any sense.† But possess your soul in patience, try to set your affairs in order, and then fly to to us ! You shall be received with all friendly warmth : rely upon that ! We know your intrinsic worth, and what you weigh ; ‡ and not we alone, but other good people know it as well ; among whom, especially greet you, Jungfer Fahlmer, the Resident's wife, and the Gerocks. Every Saturday we talk of brother Crespel, and regret that you do not help us

---

\* "Und die seidnen Buben beguckten mich von vorn und hinten." George, in Goetz von Berlichingen. (The silken pages stared at me from head to foot.)

† Goethe. It will be remembered that the spirit of caste was so strong at Weimar that, in the end, the Duke found it politic to have Goethe "ennobled."

‡ Continuation of the comparison to a bar of gold.

to laugh. We have now a hobby which gives us great pleasure : it is the new German opera by Professor Klein, in Mannheim, *Gunther von Schwarzburg*, which has been improved and augmented by the praiseworthy Saturday society, with notes, remarks, and even designs. Further, Philip has sent us a programme of the Carnival diversions at Weimar, wherein, among other things, there is a tragedy bearing the title, *Life and Deeds, Death, and Reception in Elysium of the late celebrated Queen Dido of Carthage*. A tragedy in thirty-one scenes, never before represented ; a spectacle such as has never been seen or heard of under the sun. Among other things, Jack Pudding (Hanswurst) is Mayor of Carthage, and rival to Æneas. Further, the first fifteen scenes are represented on the earth, and in this life : now at Carthage, now in a forest, now in a market-place, now in a room, and so on. The following ten scenes occur in Hades, but the last six in beautiful Elysium. In one word, the thing should be read when one has an indigestion, and I will answer for the cure. . . . Farewell, dear, good friend ! rest assured that I am your true friend and mother,

C. E. GOETHE.

9. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 13th June, 1777.

DEAR SON : God's blessing upon you and all belonging to you ! Here is a little book which I am directed from Weimar to send to you. Who the author is, God knows.

But, dear son, what are you about ? One hears

and sees nothing from the good Lavater, who is to me so dear. With us it is as it is written : the heart of man is defiant and desponding. Since my children are no longer with me, everything depends upon the letters we receive. From Weimar we have good news from Emmendingen. Is Frau Schlosser \* ill? perhaps dangerously? God knows! If the post were not about leaving, I could write more, but the little book has been here longer than it ought. Let us trust everything to the Lord : He is love, consequently all will go well. Greet wife and children, and rest assured that I am your faithful mother and true friend,

GOETHE.

N.B. Is it not so? You have forgotten the copper-plates, which were for us; a portion of them belong in the first "Essay on Physiognomy;" and then there is the Herr Rath's portrait, and mine also.

---

There is in Lavater's diary an interesting account of a visit to the Frau Rath's daughter, Cornelia, about whom so much anxiety is expressed (and justly) in the preceding letter. Lavater visited her in 1774, on his way to Frankfort, three years before her death.

"Sunday, the 19th June, I arrived at the post-house in Carlsruhe. I asked at once for Herr Hof-rath Schlosser. He is not at his country place. But the Frau Hofrätin? † Oh yes. I set forth

---

\* Her only daughter, Cornelia,

† Councillor's wife.

without delay, very curious to see Schlosser's wife and Goethe's sister. I knocked: a young, sprightly girl came out—not the Councillor's wife, thought I. Directly behind her came a tall, pale, very august lady, in a white dress; both transfixed me with their eyes—began to smile: 'Ah, perhaps you are Herr Lavater?' 'I am.' The young girl shouted out so loud that Frau Schlosser shut the door, where company was sitting. 'Not so loud, my child. Are you Lavater?' The young girl continued to hop about, shout, seized me by the hand, led me into Schlosser's very lofty, very simple study, full of a thousand things. I begged them to return to their visitors. They went. I looked a little over the library, read the *Frankfort Advertiser*, drank a cup of tea. In the mean time Frau Schlosser came back. Her husband was occupied in some business in the vicinity of Strasbourg. I wrote a note to Goethe, as his sister said he was expecting me on Sunday. Now the visitors went away, another girl came in, sister of the first one, Antoinette and Catharine Gerock: how glad they were to see me! Goethe's profile in plaster hung in the room, a perfect likeness; portraits of Goethe's parents, of Fraulein von Klettenberg, a matchless old lady. We talked of Laocoön, which stood in the room; we went into their simple garden, which had been laid out by their own hands; we talked of a hundred other things—of my friends in Zürich, of Passavant, of Merck, who is too indolent to write letters, but has made an excellent translation, of our pleasure at being together.'





GOETHE'S SISTER, CORNELIA SCHLOSSER.

*Drawn by Goethe in the margin of a proof-sheet of Götz von Berlichingen (1773), and sent to Frederica Oeser. From an engraving in Robert Koenig's "Deutsche Literaturgeschichte."*

10. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 23d June, 1777.

“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.”\* His word shall surely stand. New, living, present witnesses are we, who know that our Cornelia, our only daughter, is now in the grave; and indeed, wholly unexpectedly; the flash and the stroke were one. O dear Lavater! The poor mother had much, much to bear. My husband had been ill the whole winter—the careless shutting of a door would startle him—and to him I had to be the messenger of the death of his daughter, whom he loved above everything. My heart was as if crushed; but the thought, “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” † sustained me, so that I did not sink under my grief. Without a belief as firm as a rock in God—the God who numbers the hairs of the head, without whom no sparrow falls; who neither slumbers nor sleeps, ‡ who is never gone on a journey, § who knows the thought of my heart before it is formed, who hears me without my having need to cut myself with knives and lancets till the blood gushes out; ¶ who, in one word, is love—without belief in Him it would be impossible to bear any such thing. Truly man feels his own (weak) nature. Paul says, No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous; || but it is one thing to feel, another to be discontented with God’s leading, and to put one’s self in

\* Isaiah 40 : 29.

† Amos 3 : 6.

‡ Psalms 121 : 4.

§ Allusions to 1 Kings 18 : 27–28.

|| Hebrews 12 : 11.

the place of those who have no hope. But we who know that beyond the grave dwells immortality, and that our life, which is but a span long, may also soon be at its end—us it becomes to kiss the hand that chastens us, and to say (truly with a thousand tears), “The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord.” \*

Dear son, your letter did me much good; and yet you are vexed with yourself that you cannot comfort us. But if I tell you that it was a cordial to me that I had open before me your whole, warm, feeling, friendly heart? for if I only see a line of yours, all the happy moments occur to me when we ate at the same table, when you were under my roof, when you came at nine o'clock in the evening to my sitting-room, where I had hardly seen you a moment, and yet knew at once on which round of the long ladder on which my sons stand I should place you, and that I was not mistaken; how I wept the whole day of your departure—all this comes back to memory if I but see your handwriting on an address. Forgive me, dear son, that I go on scribbling so long. Know it is now one of my dearest occupations to write letters to the friends who are near to my heart, who share with me joy and sorrow. I live in this great city as in a desert. I have only one of the Fahlmers who understands me (and she is now, unfortunately, in Düsseldorf). Now, my dear friend, farewell; greet your dear wife. . . . One thing more: I have received two excellent letters from my dear son Schlosser. He bears

---

\* Job 1: 21.



it as a Christian, and a man, and believes in God. Now the Almighty bless you, and all belonging to you. Keep your love for me; mine shall endure to the grave—yes, beyond it—this says, and will maintain.

Your faithful

MOTHER AJA.

*II. Wieland to Frau Aja.*

DEAR MOTHER AJA: This instant I receive a letter from Klinger, which puts me in some perplexity. He offers me a work, "The Ladies' Apology, or the New Orpheus," a tragical story: he has written it, he says, to aid his mother, and it is at the service of the *Mercury*, serially, provided I will give him for his mother's benefit as much as I would give any other *honest, good-hearted fellow*. Now Klinger is dear to me, and I would not begrudge it to his poor mother, if her son's "New Orpheus" might contribute something toward her coming better through the approaching winter. But, you see yourself, dearest Frau Aja, that this alone is not sufficient. If this work should be of the same stamp as our friend Klinger's previous tragic *explosions*, I could not use it for the *Mercury*. I must, therefore, in order not to buy a cat in a bag, know beforehand *what it is*. You have in former times interested yourself for poor Klinger, dear mother; I know not how the case stands now, or whether he in the mean time has done anything to incur the loss of your favor. But if he still, as I suspect, has admittance to you, I would like to beg you to get him to give you the above-mentioned *manuscript*, and then to

have you give me a candid opinion of it. But should this commission be in the slightest degree disagreeable and inconvenient to you, let it be as if I had not mentioned it. Klinger may then send me his *manuscript* himself, and take the chance whether I can use it or not.

This winter, my charming little mother, we see each other—I am coming to pass Christmas with you ; for I must go to Mannheim to hear Schweitzer's *Rosamunde*, for which (as people say) I have written the text. To musical souls it will be a great festival. But the best of it is that it gives me an opportunity to pay you a visit at Frankfort, and to our Merck at Darmstadt. I cannot express to you how much I rejoice in the prospect of it.

Your son Goethe is sitting, like Dr. Luther two centuries and a half ago in the Wartburg, and sketches the Monk and the Nun,\* and feels quite at home among the spirits of the old knightly times who haunt that noble castle ; so I believe—for he gives to poor me no sign of life. Perhaps he does no better by you ; but for all that he loves us none the less. With all his peculiarities, he is and continues to be one of the best, noblest, and most admirable men on God's earth. And who, now, would not wish to know personally the father and mother of such a man ? My best respects to the former,

---

\* A rock, bearing a fancied resemblance to two persons embracing, projects from the Mittelstein, a hill near the Wartburg, and has attached to it the legend that it represents the petrified forms of a monk and nun, who, escaping from their cloisters, were here turned into stone at the moment of meeting. Wieland has versified this legend.

and let me know, at your convenience, if your son Wieland will be welcome?

WEIMAR, the 30th September, 1777.

May I beg you to forward the inclosed letter to Klinger?

12. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAR FRAU AJA: A thousand thanks for your reiterated assurance that I shall find a friendly welcome in your hospitable house. I leave here on the 13th, and have the fixed intention to be with you by Wednesday, therefore a day sooner than I lately wrote. But it will be best, dear mother, that you do not expect me, and as a matter of course I hope that I shall not disturb in any particular the order and method of your household. The greatest honor you can show me is to treat me as a son. The violinist\* is a very good creature, though a clumsy lout, who shall let you hear something of his *savoir faire*.

Not a word further. All my thoughts have ridden on before with twenty-four horn-blowing postilions, and there is nothing of me here but a little bit of heart and a wandering shadow.

Adieu, dear good mother; commend me to your lord and master, whom I cannot yet greet as father until I see if he has any fancy to acknowledge himself as such.

My mother and the wife of my heart greet you; and the latter, with all her goodness and equanimity, envies me, after all, a little, this time. If it were

---

\* Kranz, who was to accompany him.

not for the little one, I truly believe I should bring her with me. But that now cannot be.

Brother Wolf is not yet here. He returns as I leave. Philip, however, already has the book. Many thanks for my copy. Further of this by word of mouth.

WEIMAR, the 10th December, 1777.

Once more adieu, from your . . .

Affectionate son, . . .

WIELAND.

13. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

MANNHEIM, the 23d Decemb., 1777.

DEAREST MOTHER : Here I am now at Mannheim, and Heaven only knows how I feel. My heart and mind are with you and our dear good papa, and our friend Merck, with whom I am now for always and ever agreed. What a fall, dear mother ! from your house into the bottom-mud of the great frog-ditch of Abdera !\* Let us not speak of it. We will see how we may extricate ourselves with honor. As soon as I can stand it no longer, I hasten back to you. The famous opera, which was to have been played for the first time on the 7th January, is now, according to report not to be given till the 13th or 14th. Oh, these people !—I see in advance that I shall be here in a continual rage, and my friends can therefore be perfectly at ease about my *bonhomme*.

Ade, dear Papa, dear mother Aja ! May Heaven

---

\* Allusion to his novel, "Die Abderiten," which has been translated into English, under the title of "The Republic of Fools : being the History of the State and People of Abdera in Thrace."

recompense you for the blissful days which I have lived with and through you? Kranz bends his knees. The good fellow cried like a child when we were outside of Frankfort, and once more in the open, and said from time to time wonderful things in the storm and stress of his heart. Once more, adieu, best of mothers! I beg you to send the inclosed to the post, and ever to hold dear

Your son,

WIELAND.

Our greetings to all deserving them.

14. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAR MOTHER: The day of my deliverance out of this Babylonian Abdera approaches. A general rehearsal of *Rosamunde* with the scenery, which is to be given next Wednesday, detains me still; otherwise I should have left to-day. The precise day when I shall be again with you I cannot name, for the reason that I do not yet know whether I shall make my visit to Herr Grossschlag from Darmstadt or from Frankfort. But I know, dearest Frau Aja, that I shall be welcome to you and our dear Papa, let me come when I will. From home I have very good reports. Adieu, dear, best mother. How much that is amusing we shall have to relate to you of this fair Mannheim!

Kranz makes his *salamale* \* in all the devotion of his heart.

MANNHEIM, the 12th January, 1778.

Your very own

W.

---

\* Low bow, salaam.

Wieland did not see the opera brought out : at the last moment it was indefinitely postponed by the death of the Elector of Bavaria, which threw the court into mourning. The only point of interest connected with it is that it brought Wieland acquainted with Mozart, who conducted one of the rehearsals.

15. *Frau Rath to Fräulein von Göchhausen.*

The following doggerel verses are a reply by the Frau Rath to a similar effusion from Fräulein von Göchhausen, written on green paper, and containing birthday greetings. They are without date ; but Dr. Keil, from the context, assigns them to February, 1778. We give them in the original, followed by an attempt at translation :

Dein guter Wunsch auf grün Papier  
 Hat mir gemacht sehr viel Pläsir,  
 Im Verse machen habe nicht viel gethan,  
 Das sieht mann diesen warlich an,  
 Doch hab ich gebohren ein Knäblein schön  
 Das thut das alles gar trefflich verstehn,  
 Schreibt Puppenspiele kunterbunt  
 Tausend Alexandriner in einer Stund.  
 Doch da derselbe zu dieser Frist  
 Geheimdter Legations Rath in Weimar ist,  
 So kan Er bei bewandten Sachen  
 Keine Verse vor Frau Aja machen.  
 Sonst solltest du wohl was besseres kriegen,  
 Jetzt musst du dich hieran begnügen,  
 Es mag also dabei verbleiben  
 Ich will meinen Dank in Prosa schreiben.

Thy friendly wish on paper green,  
 To me a pleasure great has been ;

In verses I have not much done,  
As may be seen by this very one ;  
Yet I have borne a little boy fair  
Who understands it to a hair :  
Writes puppet-plays, gay, full of power,  
Makes alexandrines a thousand in an hour ;  
But as he now, in present days,  
As Privy Councillor in Weimar stays,  
So can he, for Frau Aja's sake,  
In this case no pretty verses make,  
Else should'st thou have had something better sent,  
But now must be with this content ;  
So it is, and so let it be.  
My thanks, in prose, I'll write to thee.

Fräulein von Göchhausen was maid-of-honor to the Duchess Amalia. She was little and crooked, but with all the wit and not a few sparks of the malice which tradition associates with ill-shape. Oddly enough, they all called her Thusnelda, after the wife of the German hero, Arminius, who figures in Tacitus. The name was a bitter jest, as applied to the little maid, but she accepted it, and doubtless gave many a biting repartee in return for it. The Duke and Goethe are said to have been very fond of her, although active hostilities were always going on between them, in the warfare of wit, fun, and practical jokes.

*16. Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 20th March, 1778.

. . . DEAR SON : How fares it with you in this work-a-day world ? . . . If the good God would only, for just once more, grant me the joy of seeing you at my round table ! To have you once more with us is and continues to be one of my

favorite ideas, out of which I often weave for myself the most charming fancies. This winter we have also become acquainted with friend Wieland. Who-soever sees that man and does not grow to love him, I will not express my opinion about him. He (Wieland) was with us 8 days, together with friend Merck. Oh, what a delightful period was that, once more ! You would not understand it so, for among you there are still a few good people ; but among us ! ! ! ! I am only afraid of rusting out ; where one is obliged to associate with none but bad people, there is 1000 to 1 to be wagered, that if one does not give heed, one becomes bad too. How are Kauffman and his dear wife ? I would indeed like to see him as father of a family : it must suit his face very well. Brother Wolf is well, thank God ; is very happy in his little garden-house, and for the birthday of the reigning Duchess has composed a nice piece of work, a drama,\* of which the monodrame *Prosperina* forms a portion. He sent it to us to read, for it will hardly be printed. Schlosser and his children are well. Klinger is now with him.

Farewell, dear son ! Greet your whole household, also all dear friends, and be assured that we are and remain your true and faithful friends.

C. E. GOETHE.

P.S. If it were possible for you to send us a few more impressions of the Doctor's portrait, in copper-plate, we should thank you heartily for them ; people

---

\* "Der Triumph der Empfindsamkeit" (The Triumph of Sensibility).



torment us continually for some such thing as a memento.

*17. Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 26th June, 1778.

DEAR SON : The Doctor has sent us from Weimar the fourth part of the " Physiognomy," but without plates, for which (as he says) we are to address ourselves to you. So, dear Lavater, the plates for the fourth part. We are sorry that we must trouble you so often, but, after all, one does not like to have imperfect books ; and what would a " Physiognomy" be without plates ?

I would gladly write you much and many things, but for to-day it is not possible—only this much, that we once more in this earthly life have had joyous days : thè Duchess Mother\* has been with us. I care nothing for lauding and praising. One must always see things for one's self, everything else is wearisome twaddle ; therefore I say to you nothing more than that we were delighted.

The Doctor, thank God, is well and happy. Be sure to thank Kaufmann's wife for her dear little letter ; I shall also write her soon. Your dear wife—of whom, this very day, a certain Herr Reinwald has told me so much that is good—greet her, too, a thousand times, the dear good woman.

Kiss your children, remain our friend, as you know that we to the end of our days are your true friends.

C. E. GOETHE.

---

\* Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar.

18. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAR, BEST FRAU AJA : Here is your *Mercury* for the month of July. There is a place in it, viz., a little parcel to the address of a certain Herr Burgo-meister of N. N.,\* otherwise called Anti-Pope,† which was already written and printed, when it came by chance to my ears that Aunt Fahlmer was going to marry the Anti-Pope. Had any one, as occasion offered, very prettily written me this, I would, out of love to the good aunt, have passed the sponge over the past, and not stood upon trifles. Now, it is as it is. For the rest, I am glad that your grandchildren are to have so good a Vice-Mother, and am willing to grant the Moralist his good fortune, if our Lord God grants it to him, although his whole way of thinking is odious to me.

Our dear Duchess ‡ we are now expecting daily, and I rejoice in anticipation over all that is dear and good which I shall hear about the Casa Santa § in Frankfort. Farewell, dear mother, and do not utterly forget your son, although born to you without travail.

WEIMAR, the 26th Jul., 1778.

WIELAND.

\* *Nomen nescio.*

† The Frau Rath's son-in-law, Schlosser, who had published a translation of Pope's "Essay on Man," with an introduction entitled, "Anti-Pope, oder Versuch über den natürlichen Menschen" (Anti-Pope, or an Essay on the Natural Man).

‡ The Duchess Anna Amalia.

§ Casa Santa. The Goethe house in Frankfort. The above letter seems to be the source of this name, by which the Goethe house was generally known in the circle of friends.

19. *Fräulein von Göchhausen to Frau Rath.*

ETTERSBERG, the 25th 8br., 78.

Heartily beloved Frau Aja, I always rejoice when I sit down to write to you ; but would to Heaven that my letters might be something to you, or that I always knew something interesting to write to you. This time I will tell you of the last theatrical merry-making which took place here at the ducal residence at Ettersburg. I shall inflict every kind of burning torment on Dr. Wolf and Philip, if I hear that they have already written you of the whole affair ; for I begged these children of men to leave me, for once, this pleasure.

Therefore, the 20th October of this, under God, passing year, it occurred that the *Médecin malgré lui*, translated by Einsiedel, and the *Fahrmarktsfest zu Plundersweilern* were performed in the newly-built Ettersburg theatre, to the great delight of all spectators, high and low. For three entire weeks beforehand there was no end of noise and hammering, and our Princess,\* Dr. Wolf, Krauss, etc., were constantly tumbling over each other in their great labor and assiduity. . . . Dr. Wolf played all his parts beyond measure excellently and well ; had also taken great care to rig himself out, especially as the Marktschreier (Mountebank). O could wishes have conjured you here to us, just for those few hours !

Among the spectators was the Hereditary Princess of Brunswick, who had come a few days before, and manifested great pleasure in our peep-show.

---

\* Duchess Anna Amalia.

After the play a great banquet was given, after which the persons of rank took leave in a body (except our Duchess), but for us pack of players there was arranged a grand ball, which lasted till the clear, bright morning, and all was merriment and good-nature. To say, also, something of myself, I cannot help mentioning, with all modesty, that I played the noble governess in the puppet-show very nicely.

20. *Duchess Anna Amalia of Saxe-Weimar to Frau Rath.*

ETTERSBERG, the 4th November, 78.

DEAR MOTHER: I cannot sufficiently express to you how glad I was to hear that you were well, and that you for once have had, also, a few good days.\* Friend Merck is right in insisting on coming here with you, dear mother, next spring; do not look upon the matter as so difficult. Friend Wolff wishes it too: we have lately talked a great deal about it. We will provide the old father, during the time, with all sorts of entertainment. Kranz shall come, and shall play to him on the violin in a model style. I think, dear mother, that your heart will itself speak enough for your Hätschel Hans † to make you wish to see him once more. You cannot think how much I rejoice in the thought of it.

Thusnelde will give you a full description of the

---

\* The failing health of the Herr Rath gave his wife, at this time, much care and anxiety.

† An English equivalent for Hätschel Hans would perhaps be Johnny Darling Hätscheln, to fondle, to pet; Hans, Johnny. Goethe's name was *Johann Wolfgang*.

*fête*, which I have given here. Our friend Wolff has had the friendship for me to arrange everything himself; the *Fahrmarkt von Plundersweilern* went off splendidly. Your son sends you a copy of it, as it was played here. The ballad-singer's picture, Wolff, Krauss, and I painted: it is something more for your Weimar room. The music to the songs I am going to have arranged for the harpsichord, and as soon as it is done you shall have it also. Farewell, best mother, and think of me as a friend who is attached to you for life.

AMELIE.

Many greetings to the old father.

---

The Duchess Anna Amalia is one of the most charming figures in the Weimar circle. Genial, light-hearted, fond of pleasure, she was also not lacking in judgment, good-sense, and discretion. She governed her duchy with ability, yet resigned it without regret to her son, Carl August, on his coming of age. Thenceforward the Court of the Duchess Mother was the centre of the mirth and fun, the wit and wisdom of Weimar, while her daughter-in-law, Louise, the reigning Duchess, maintained, on her part, stateliness and formal dignity, and possessed the happy talent of saying the right thing at the right time. Her noble bearing after the battle of Jena has passed into history, with the exclamation wrung from Napoleon,

“Voilà une femme, qu'avec nos deux cent canons, nous n'avons pu faire trembler.”

The Frau Rath was just the woman to please the Duchess Mother. The latter wrote to her with the

utmost freedom, and the Frau Rath responded with equal heartiness, so that a letter from her "dear mother Aja" was greeted by the Duchess as a joyful event. The reader should not be misled by the Frau Rath's compliments, and frequent repetitions of "Serene Highness;" these are the mere externals resulting, naturally, from the great distance which separated the Frau Rath socially from a Duchess, especially in the eighteenth century. At that period adulation had not, as now, ceased to be thought polite, as is pointed out by Lord Houghton in regard to Humboldt.\*

To the present day, after all the chances and changes of time, German epistolary forms remain an object of wonder and amazement to all not educated to them.

Of the Duchess Amalia, Goethe wrote: "Whatever can give grace or charm to life, she sought with wise moderation to collect around her. . . . She delighted in the conversation of persons of talent, and sought occasions of forming connections of this kind, of maintaining them, and of turning them to account; indeed, there is no one of any note connected with Weimar whose powers were not, sooner or later, called forth in her circle." (Address in commemoration of the Duchess Amalia.)

21. *Merck to Wieland.*

FRCKF., the 21st Novbr., 1778.

DEAR BROTHER: I left home last Monday. Have had a troublesome investigation in the country, and

---

\* Monographs by Lord Houghton.

have another before me next week. Meantime my way led me through Frankfort, and thus I have passed, now, two days in *Casa Santa*, and have recapitulated with Frau Aja everything that occurred to us last year in this room. Yesterday all the maidens were again together, who came last year on your account so often to the house, and Madame Brentano played again the jig on the harpsichord. At the same time we remembered thee in the evening, in the capital wine cursed Jacobi \* and his like, and my tears flowed down at all these incidents, and because it is now a whole year since we have seen each other, and that it would be another half year before anything of the kind could occur. Hereupon the Herr Rath generously declared that he was willing to let his wife go, in case the Duke would send Fr. Kranz to play to him on the violin while we played our little piece at Weimar. There will be shortly issued by me a supplication in form, in the name of Frau Aja and consort, to the Duke, to release the musician Kranz from his duties for four weeks in case we are desired.

On the back of the letter Frau Rath wrote as follows :

The 24th November, 1778.

DEAR SON : Merck was with us three days. Now that he is gone, I look about his room and put things in order—a work very necessary where poets have been, as you can sufficiently see from the fore-

---

\* Wieland complained because Jacobi gave him so little assistance in carrying on the *Mercury*, which they had undertaken together.

going letter. For the poor letter would have surely lain here and never reached its destination had Frau Aja less insight into poets' ways. But she is, thank God! not yet out of practice, although Herr Wolfgang Goethe, for now three years, no longer gladdens her house, but lets his light shine in Weimar. Dear son, have the kindness to forward the inclosed letter. With the Anti-Pope everything has been attended to: each one has his own way of thinking. I hope soon to hear good reports from you and your dear wife.

I am, although in great haste,

Eure wahre Freundin,\*

GOETHE.

Johann Heinrich Merck was the son of an apothecary at Darmstadt, and held there the position of paymaster in the army, with the title of Kriegs-rath, which looks rather formidable if translated into War Councillor. Goethe made his acquaintance after his return home from Strassburg, and Merck was among the first to recognize and thoroughly appreciate the genius of his friend. He urged the publication of "Goetz von Berlichingen," which the two published jointly, as they knew Goethe's father would give no aid toward it, although the old gentleman was proud enough of it when it appeared.

Introduced by Goethe to the Weimar circle, Merck at once won the favorable opinion of the Duchess

\* The feminine form, *Freundin*, makes it clear who is the writer, which would not be the case were we to substitute, "your true friend," Goethe.



Amalia and of her son the Duke. The latter availed himself of Merck's keen judgment in art matters, and found him a very valuable assistant in the purchase of pictures and in collecting engravings. When the Duke or the Duchess Amalia made journeys to the Rhine, Merck was always in attendance to accompany them to galleries and point out the merits of collections. His duties as paymaster occupied but a small portion of his time.

Merck had but little productive talent, but was a born critic, and had a clear insight in literature and art, and was of great service to Goethe at the outset of his career. Goethe somewhat ungenerously gave him the sobriquet of Mephistopheles, and he is said to have furnished some traits for the portraiture of that personage in *Faust*. Later in life Merck became much interested in fossil bones, groping about with great zeal in the darkness which prevailed on that subject before the classifications of Cuvier. He seems to have been driven hither and thither by an energetic, restless spirit, and, at length, overwhelmed by the failure of a commercial undertaking, and tormented by an organic disease, he put an end to his own life.

22. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAREST FRAU AJA : I have had to-day to write such an enormous heap of wearisome business letters, that I am as tired as a dog, and as dried up as a Professor *Moralium*. It is therefore impossible for me to write more to my dear mother with the *Mercury*, which herewith waits upon her than that her last letter, written jointly with brother Merck, gave

me heartfelt pleasure. I went at once myself with the letter for the Duchess, and as a recompense for the pleasure your prose gave her I passed a very charming evening with this truly incomparable woman. I have not seen her in such good-humor for 7 years as on that evening. She will meantime have probably written herself to Eu. Lbdn,\* as she certainly counts upon the pleasure of seeing her beloved Frau Aja here in the spring. In return, Kranz shall appear at your house with viol and violin, and play so much that is beautiful and new to the Herr Rath (to whom my most obedient respects) that he thereby shall forget all his suffering. Something further in the course of a fortnight. For the present, 1000 times ade, from

Your very own son,

WIELAND.

W., 4th Decemb., 1778.

23. *Wieland to Merck.*

WEIMAR, the 9th Dec., 1778.

L. BR. : † My little flock has again increased itself, the 7 *hujus*, in the afternoon between 3 and 4, with a lively, well-formed boy, who is all the dearer to me because he cost his mother very little pain, and slipped into the world as lightly and nimbly as the very devil himself. On the other hand, he has, it is true, no such huge brain-case as Louis, his elder brother ; but as this is a security to me that he will

---

\* Abbreviation for *Euere Liebden*—your love.

† *Lieber Bruder*.

be so much the less a poet, it is all the more agreeable to me. In short, he is a very nice little man, and, according to all appearances, as happily organized as one need be to be well off in this world. But now, L. Br., comes another important point, and this is, that I, in order to introduce the newcomer to the world under so much the better auspices, have given thee and Frau Aja to him as godparents, and I shall have you both, *ex consensu præsunto*, written down in the church-book in this capacity ; hoping that you will be favorably inclined also toward this my offspring, out of love to me, and, as much as God shall give you opportunity and power, will help to make him an honest and useful fellow, which you can count upon being reciprocated by me toward my little godchild, so long as there is in me breath and motion.

I am now 20 per cent better than before, and if it keeps on a while in this way I shall become a thoroughly good patriarch.

Thy last letter, Herzens br.,\* with what thou writest of thy feelings at the round table in *Casa Santa*, and of our Duchess Amalia's letters to Frau Aja, has stirred my whole heart. But I can say nothing to thee about it, except that it seems to me as if I could feel into thy soul ; and I wish that I could kiss the scars which are the cause that a heart like thine feels so strangely at every not too ordinary expression of kindness, precisely as if thou anxiously fearedst it might be—only an illusion ! Good, excellent man ! What must thou have

---

\* Heart's brother.

suffered to come to this ! With such susceptibility and delicate feeling for everything good and pure in human nature, with such a natural disposition to love and to devote thyself ! I dare not say any more about it. But if I were to become untrue to thee, I shall have first poisoned my wife and strangled my seven children. Rely upon that !

That to me and to all here, who but hang to me by a thread, Goethe has become in very many things the greatest benefit, I recognize daily more and more, and honor and love him for it also, from the bottom of my heart. Should Heaven further bless us at Christmas with a prince, it will be thoroughly well with us ; were it to be a princess, I should be sorry most for the young Duchess, who seems to have wholly taken it into her little Hessian\* head that it *must* be a prince. Ah, dear man ! God grant thee further joy in thy two jovial boys, and in all belonging to thee.

---

The birth of Louis, the elder brother, Wieland had previously announced to Gleim :

WEIMAR, the 30th October, 1777.

DEAREST BROTHER GLEIM, AND DEAR, DEAR SISTER CLEMINDE : In two words only : Victory ! Day before yesterday evening, at 9 o'clock, we received a sound, pretty, broad-headed, large-nosed,

---

\* The Duchess Louise was a princess of Hesse-Darmstadt. The child was not born until the 3d of February, 1779, and was a princess, who died at the age of five years.

in short, splendid boy, in whom may God grant us to live to have joy. It was after a somewhat hard struggle of Nature, through which, God be praised, mother and child have passed most favorably. He has a strong look and a good, manly voice. It seems to me as if I saw how all this rejoices you, dear souls. With me it now begins a *Conto Nuovo*. The Duchess Louise and Prince Constantin were the godparents, and the Duke was so kind as to be present in person at the baptism. In return, the boy is named Ludwig Friedrich August. Give him an uncle's blessing, dear heart's brother, and may you live to see him become a man. Amen!

Very much in the same strain is this letter from the Duchess Anna Amalia to Merck:

WEIMAR, the 28th Dec., 1778.

L. M. : \* In thought I have ever been writing to you, but as wise Mother Nature did not bestow upon me such a nose-bone as she gave to Kaufmann, by virtue of which he can do everything he wishes, I have had to submit to wishing only when I can perform. But I do not know of much that is new to tell you from here. The most interesting to us is the daily expectation of the Duchess's confinement. Should it please Heaven to grant a nice boy, it will be a blessing for the whole country, and I am convinced that you will also feel an interest in it.

Danischmend † has again, as you know, had a

---

\* Lieber Merck.

† Wieland, so called from the title of one of his works.

christening. *Je craius qu'à la fin il ne se ressent un peu*, the frequent confinements of his wife and the *Mercury*.\* But he seems to find great pleasure in both, so we must let him alone, *chacun a sa folie*. We have made a splendid acquisition here in an original by Rubens, which I gave at Christmas to my son the Duke. I write nothing about it, because you will view it in the spring with your own art-critic's eyes.

The Waterloos † I enjoy in anticipation. Thusnelde greets you with her whole soul.

I am ever your sincere friend,

AMELIE.

24. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

DEAR SON : It is long, very long, since we have seen or heard anything of you, my dear friend ; but what matters that. You are so deeply impressed upon our hearts, your memory is so blessed among us, your loving, friendly face is so present before our eyes, that no letters, no lifeless writing is necessary to remind us that the excellent man Lavater was in our midst, and walked among us. What pleases me least in this work-a-day world is that the best people can be very little to each other : God's plan demands that one in the east, another in the west shall salt the earth and keep it from corruption. My friends and dear ones are all far, far away from me : my forever-loved Klettenberg in a better world, my

---

\* The number of Wieland's children, which finally reached fourteen, was the subject of constant jest at Weimar.

† Waterloo, a Dutch landscape painter.

Fahlmer\* in Emmendingen. There may well be other good people in Frankfort; perhaps I may some time wonder in eternity that I have mistaken them here; but for the time being Frau Aja goes on her way alone.

How are you, then, dear good son? How are your dear wife and children and friends? I hope that all are happy and well. God keep you so. Amen.

My husband, who sends his best respects to you, regrets that he must again give you trouble with the following. But if you call to mind the Herr Rath's great love of order you will readily see what an annoyance an imperfect book must cause in his collection (especially such an one as the "Physiognomy"); and you will not take it amiss if he begs you to give the following numbers to some one of the Zurich merchants who come here to the Easter Fair. First, the copper-plates to the 4th part of the "Physiognomy," promised through Hrn Nüscherln, as soon as possible. Second, the missing text to the third part, which Kriegsath Merck sent you, as well as—third, a few more of the Herr Rath's portraits by Herr Schmoll.

Once more, forgive the great trouble and plague.

Your brother Wolf is, thank God, very well in Weimar. The Duchess Mother was here last summer—an excellent woman, believe me on my word; a great and noble human feeling animates her whole soul, but she does not prate nor vaunt herself, as so many mock sentimental persons are wont to do.

Now, dear Lavater, God's blessing upon you and

---

\* Johanna Fahlmer, who had married Schlosser.

all yours. Greet all who still think of us, and be assured that I to the end of my pilgrimage am,

Your true friend and faithful mother,

C. E. GOETHE.

FRANKFORT, the 23d February, 1779.

---

“The friend and confidante of the Frau Rath was the pious, intelligent Fraülein von Klettenberg. ‘In her and in my mother,’ says Goethe, ‘I had two excellent guides; I called them Rath und That (Word and Deed); for when the former cast her serene, nay blessed glance over earthly things, that which had perplexed the rest of us mortals readily unravelled itself before her, and she could almost always point out the right way, for the reason that she looked down into the labyrinth from above, and was not herself entangled in it; then, when a decision was once made we could rely upon my mother’s readiness and energy. As sight aided the former, so faith came to the assistance of the latter, and as she retained her serenity in all circumstances, she was never wanting in expedients for accomplishing what was proposed or desired.’ When Goethe in ‘Wilhelm Meister’ had thrown the letters and conversations of Fraülein von Klettenberg into the form of the ‘Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele’ (Confessions of a Beautiful Soul), the Frau Rath copied with her own hand, for her son, from the ‘Theologische Annalen,’ a review of those pages, and added the following words: ‘My criticism is Psalm 1 : 3—His leaf also shall not wither.’ It certainly did



not occur to my dear Klettenberg that, after so long a time, her memory should still grow green and blossom, and bring blessings to after generations. Thou, my dear son, wast destined by Providence for the preservation and dissemination of these unfading leaves. God's blessing and a thousand thanks for it ; and as it is clearly to be seen from this narrative that no good seed is lost, but bears fruit in its season, let us not be weary in well-doing, for the harvest will reward us with full barns." (Frau Rath, Briefwechsel, etc., by Dr. Keil).

25. *Frau Rath to the Duchess Anna Amalia.*

FRANKFORT, the 11th April, 1779.

MOST SERENE PRINCESS : To judge by the appetite of my Saturday maidens,\* the little biscuits must be gone long ago. I take now the great liberty to send your Serene Highness another small stock. Dear Princess, do not take my freedom unkindly. With us it is fair-time!!!! Weitmäulige Laffen, feilschen und gaffen, gaffen und kaufen, Bestienhaufen, Kinder und Fratzen, Affen und Katzen, etc.† Yet speak with respect, Frau Aja ! Madame La Roche is here too ! Dearest Princess, could Doctor Wolf only see the son-in-

---

\* "Meine Samstagmädel." The Saturday circle of young girls previously alluded to.

† From Goethe's "Jahrmakkt zu Plundersweilern." "Wide-mouthed coxcombs, higgling and staring, staring and buying, pack of brutes, children and frights, monkeys and cats, etc." These are the growls of the gypsy captain looking on at the fair, and longing to lead on his band to sack and plunder it.

law whom the authoress of *Sternheim* wants to hang on to her second daughter, he would, according to his former laudable habit, gnash his teeth, and swear right godlessly. Yesterday she presented the monster to me. Great Heavens!!!! if he would make me Queen of the Earth (America included), then—yes, even then, I should refuse him.\* He looks like the devil in the 7th question in Luther's small catechism, is as stupid as a grasshopper, and, to add to all his ill-luck, is a Hof-rath (Court Councillor). If I comprehend anything of all this rubbish, may I become an oyster. A woman like La Roche, certainly, of no ordinary understanding, with moderate gifts of fortune, of respectability, rank, etc., who sets directly about making her daughters unhappy, and yet writes *Sternheims* and *Frauenzimmer Briefe* (young ladies' letters); in one word, my head turns round like a mill. Your Serene Highness will pardon me relating all this, but I have the adventurer right before my eyes, and good Louisa's tears I cannot stand.

The holiday has surely passed over successfully; I too hope to learn something about it. *Fräulein Thusnelde* has a very charming gift for describing such festivities, and I trust she will maintain her reputation and let *Frau Aja* hear something about it, for she described the *Jahrmarktsfest* capitally. Should she do so, your Serene Highness will be gracious enough to present her with a share of the

---

\* "Ja, so gebe ich ihm einen Korb;" *literally*, I should give him a basket, a German colloquialism signifying "to refuse a suitor;" a similar expression, "to give the mitten," is current in some parts of the United States.

biscuits. The father commends himself to further gracious favor, and Frau Aja, who is never so happy as when she thinks of the greatest, most excellent, most amiable, best of princesses, kisses in reverence and humility the hand of her dearest Princess, and remains to the grave,

Her Serene Highness's obedient servant,

C. E. GOETHE.

The monster is named Möhr, and is actual Court Councillor to the Elector of Treves.

---

Should the reader find the conclusion of the above letter somewhat strongly expressed, he must bear in mind that, as I have already said, in the last century adulation was thought polite, as has been pointed out by Lord Houghton, in speaking of no less distinguished a person than Alexander von Humboldt.

Following the Frau Rath's letter about the marriage of Madame de la Roche's second daughter, Louise, we place Merck's letter to his wife about that of the first daughter, Maximiliane :

*Merck to his Wife.*

DARMSTADT, 29th Jan., 1774.

I was, last week, at Frankfort to see our friend De la Roche. She has made a very singular marriage for her daughter. The husband is moderately young, but is burdened with 5 children. For the rest, he is sufficiently rich, but a merchant who has few ideas beyond his business. It was a sad event to me to

go to visit our friend amid barrels of herrings and cheeses. It seems that she (La Roche) allowed herself to be persuaded by M. Dumeiz, who considered nothing but the fortune, and the particular advantage for himself to have an agreeable house to visit.

Thou shouldst have seen Madame de la Roche making head against the idle talk and jocularities of these stout merchants : enduring their magnificent dinners, and trying to amuse their Dulnesses. There have been terrible scenes, and I do not know but she may be overwhelmed under the burden of her regrets. Goethe is already the friend of the family ; he plays with the children, and accompanies Madame's harpsichord with the bass-viol. M. Brentano, although rather jealous for an Italian, is fond of him, and wishes positively that he should frequent the house."

---

The early history of Sophie de la Roche is a singular one. She was the daughter of a Dr. Gutermann, of Augsburg. In her seventeenth year she was betrothed to an Italian physician, Bianconi, of Bologna, one of her father's students. The preparations had all been made for the marriage, when Bianconi suddenly made a demand that the children should all be brought up in the Roman Church, instead of the daughters following the mother and the sons the father, as was then customary in mixed marriages. This was too much for Dr. Gutermann, a zealous Protestant, to whom the difference of religion had always seemed an obstacle. He burst into a great rage, forbade Bianconi his house, and declared the whole matter at an end. Sophie, although heart-

broken, refused to marry without her father's consent, and Bianconi returned to Bologna, let us hope, a wiser man.

After this Sophie was sent to her grandparents at Biberach, and on the death of her grandfather removed to the house of Pastor Wieland, whose wife was her father's cousin. In the summer the pastor's son, the afterward so celebrated poet, came home for his vacation. They fell in love with each other, whereupon Dr. Gutermann sends for his daughter to return home, where he and the step-mother, who in the mean time has been brought into the family, daily repeat to her that she must get married. Under these circumstances, as a marriage was impossible with Wieland, the son of a poor country pastor, and but seventeen years of age, she accepts the hand of Hof-rath de la Roche, who, so far from being daunted by the explicit avowal of her disappointments, is only the more incited to rescue her from her unhappy situation.

Madame de la Roche became one of the leading writers in the sentimental school then prevailing. She was lavish of emotion in her writings, but in her treatment of her daughters she seemed not unlike her father. We would gladly find some explanation or palliation of her inconsistency, which is a frequent subject of jest in the letters of the Frau Rath and of the Duchess Amalia, but her biographers do not suggest for her any excuses.

Her first novel had a great success, passing through nine editions; two French translations appeared, and two English ones, with the title, "Memoirs of Miss Sophie Sternheim."

In 1786 she made a journey to England, where she was taken to see Miss Burney, who was at that time wearing herself out in the service of Queen Charlotte. Miss Burney gives of her in her Diary a striking picture. The scene is in her best manner, but we are concerned only with the part relating to Wieland. "She is now *bien passée*," writes Miss Burney, "yet has a voice of touching sweetness, eyes of dove-like gentleness, looks supplicating for favor, and an air and demeanor the most tenderly caressing. I can suppose she has thought herself, all her life, the model of the favorite heroine of her own favorite romance, and I can readily believe that she had attractions, in her youth, nothing short of fascinating." Madame la Fête announced that her friend had had the most extraordinary life and adventures that had fallen to anybody's lot. Madame La Roche replied that they were, in their early part, so connected with M. Wieland, the famous author, that they would not be intelligible without his story.

*"Eh bien ! Ma tres-chère, contez nous donc un peu de ses aventures ; ma chère Miss Burney, c'étoit son amant et l'homme le plus extraordinaire—d'un génie ! d'un feu ! Eh bien, ma chère ? où l'avez-vous rencontré ? où est-ce qu'il a commencé à vous aimer ? contez-nous un peu de tout ça."*

"Madame La Roche, looking down upon her fan, then began the recital. She related their first interview, the gradations of their mutual attachment, his extraordinary talents, his literary fame and name ; the breach of their union from motives of prudence in their friends ; his change of character from piety to voluptuousness, in consoling himself for her loss

with an actress ; his various adventures, and various transformations from good to bad, in life and conduct ; her own marriage with M. de la Roche, their subsequent meeting, when she was mother of three children, and all the attendant circumstances.

“ This narrative was told in so touching and pathetic a manner, and interspersed with so many sentiments of tenderness and of heroism, that I could scarcely believe I was not actually listening to a Clelia or a Cassandra recounting the stories of her youth.”

26. *Fräulein von Göchhausen to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 12th April, 1779.

GOOD, DEAR, DARLING MOTHER : It seems to me very long since I have written to you, and still longer since I saw a letter from you, except, now and then, whatever good souls, like the Duchess and Wieland let me see, out of compassion. This misfortune is the fault solely and alone of a very unwelcome and tedious illness, which sorely plagued me, and sometimes even made me think the tender body would no longer contain the mighty spirit. And as this seemed to me very inopportune, there smoked sacrifices and burnt-offerings to the stern goddess Hygeia ; and she had compassion upon my weakness, and I now wander on again in peace and joy, and express my thanks by my enjoyment of the lovely, heart-quickenning spring. A whole page about nothing but my own insignificant self : attribute it to the weakness which still remains, and forgive in love.

I surely trust that the Herr Doctor, in accordance with his duty, has sent or is sending his admirable Iphigenia. I will therefore refrain from all chat about it, and only say this much, that he played his Orestes in a masterly manner. His costume, as well as that of Pylades, was Greek, and I have never before in my life seen him so handsome. Altogether the whole piece was so well played that the King and Queen might have said, "Dear lion, roar again!"

To-day it is to be performed again, and as heartily as I rejoice in the thought of it, yet believe me that I should be delighted if I could give my place to the mother's heart.

We are expecting now soon our good Merck. We all, you may be sure, rejoice heartily at the thought of it. The Duchess has written him that all the roasting-jacks are being examined, in order, from that quarter, at least, to give no treat to his critical nose.

As for you, dear mother, we can see you in no other way except that we must come again to Frankfort.\* Well, I swear by nothing, mountain or valley, etc., only do not be frightened if, some time, a post-chaise and six should stop before your door!

Our dear Princess greets father and mother a thousand times, and I live and die my Frau Aja's faithful

THUSNELDE.<sup>‡</sup>

---

\* The proposed visit of the Frau Rath to Weimar with Merck, so often alluded to in the preceding letters, did not take place; probably the Herr Rath's state of health not admitting of his wife's absence.



27. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 21st April, '79.

DEAR, BEST MOTHER : I am in possession of two of your dear letters, and two boxes of biscuit which came with them, for which I send you many thanks.

The intelligence you communicate to me in regard to the marriage of the La Roche's youngest daughter is so amazing that the senses stand still. I sent your letter to Doctor Wolff ; but as court-life has made him very well-behaved, he did not gnash his teeth, and still less swore, but shrugged his shoulders over the lamentable adventure. We are all curious to know the name of the man whose victim the poor Louise is to become. In this case the proverb speaks truly : Do as I say, not as I do ; for her \* emotions as set down in black and white are far distant from her heart.

The holiday passed over successfully, of which Thusnelde has given you an account. Shortly after it † was repeated, and with the same applause. I think he will send you the entire piece, and then you will see for yourself how beautiful and admirable it is, and how very worthy of him. You would be glad to know, dear mother, who made my silhouette? It was your Herr Sohn who drew it in the large, and his faithful Philip who manufactured it in the small : this is the whole riddle. Toward the end of May I think Merck will be here ; he is to stay with me in Ettersburg. Ah ! mother, mother, you

---

\* Viz., Frau La Roche's.

† "Iphigenia."

doubtless guess my thoughts.\* How is the old father? He is said not to be well; greet him from me, and that a thousand times. Farewell, best mother; hold me dear, and think frequently of your friend

AMELIE.

28. *Fräulein von Göchhausen to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 21st May.

Your letter and dear interest in my being still on this beautiful, newly adorned earth rejoiced my heart and soul. Certainly, dear mother, you have already contributed very much to the joy and delight of my life, and I am certainly thankful for it; and had you even done me no further favor, it would be already enough to make this earth dearer, when one knows that one walks about on it with such a hearty, excellent woman as you are.

Iphigenia must have come at last. I at least have daily admonished the Doctor and Philip about it, and, as far as I know, it has already long ago set out on its journey. It will be a blessed day when you sit there together and enjoy yourselves over it. But let the Doctor's health be drunk at the same time in the best and oldest wine. He and his Iphigenia surely deserve it.

We have now been a week, with sack and pack, again in our dear Ettersburg. It is, Heaven knows, a beautiful life, thus to live amid wood, mountain, and vale! Our dearest Duchess is here also, well

---

\* Her disappointment that the Frau Rath was not coming with Merck (?).

and happy. God keep her so : she deserves it so much !

Yesterday the Hr. Geh. Leg. Rath\* had performed for us here a drama, *Die Launen der Verliebten*, which he says he wrote in his eighteenth year, and has made but few changes in it. It is composed of only four persons, who were represented by the Doctor, Einsiedel, Mlle. v. Woelwarth, and Mlle. Schroeder. It is in one act, with a few airs which Kammerherr (Chamberlain) Seckendorff has composed. It was very well played indeed, and we were the whole day merry and in good spirits.

We are now living in constant expectation of our Merck. We think of him when we awake and when we go to sleep ; and when it rains or the wind blows a little stronger, you should hear the lamentation ! Poor Merck ! now perhaps he will be wet ! The wind will make riding on his horse disagreeable to him ! And if the sun shines, it doubly rejoices us on his account. So it goes all day long. If he would only come very soon ! The Doctor rides to Erfurt to meet him. Good old Wieland is now out here with us on our mountain ; he greets his heartily beloved Frau Aja with his whole soul !

The painter May is now painting in Weimar, and has already produced a whole multitude of faces. Hätschelhans † has also had himself painted. I have not yet seen it, but it is said to be good. ‡

Our Duchess greets heartily father and mother.

---

\* Viz., Herr Geheimer Legations Rath, Goethe.

† See letter No. 20, note.

‡ An engraving from this portrait is given in Lewes' "Life of Goethe," vol. 1, first edition.

Krauss has now all sorts of things to do, but will perhaps soon let something be heard and seen from him.

To the father, my fairest greeting! and for you, dearest woman, my best kiss from your

Forever faithful

Excuse the blots!!!

LOUISE G.

(Postscripts from Wieland and the Duchess.)

Dear little mother, we are here with your and our Duchess, the sole Queen forever of our free hearts, on the lofty Ettersburg.

Und Leben da, ferne vom Erdengetümmel,  
Das seelige Leben der Götter im Himmel;\*

except that it is d—d foul, unfriendly weather. Ay! were but Mother Aja also with us! For Merck we wait as a dry land for rain, Sela! Yesterday, a little drama of brother Wolff's first growth made me twenty-five years younger. For you know, surely, that we have a little theatre here in Ettersburg, as pretty as you can fancy; and that we here—but why should I gossip to you of all our joys? It only makes your heart heavy. Ade, † dear mother, with my best compliments to the dear good papa! Hold in good remembrance your son,

WIELAND.

Dear mother, I and my donkeys are here too. ‡

AMELIE.

---

\* And are living here far from the tumults of earth, the blissful life of the gods in heaven.

† Adieu.

‡ "Liebe Mutter, ich und meine Esel sind auch da." (Jahrmakzt zu Plundersweilern.)

In connection with May's portrait of Goethe there is the interesting circumstance that Wieland read to him during the sitting the first half of "Oberon," upon which he was engaged.

Wieland thus describes it, in his enthusiastic way, in a letter to Merck, dated at Weimar, August 1st, 1779:

"The past week I had a very good day with Goethe. He and I have had to make up our minds to sit to Rath May, who, *ex voto* the Duchess of Württemberg, was to take our portraits for her Serene Highness. Goethe sat morning and afternoon, and begged me, as *Serenissimus*\* was absent, to keep him company during this tiresome sitting, and for mental entertainment to read 'Oberon' to him. By good fortune it so happened that on that day this man, who is almost always in a fume, was in his best and most receptive mood, and as easily amused as a girl of sixteen. In all the days of my life I have never seen any one so pleased with the work of another as he was with 'Oberon,' throughout, and particularly with the 5th canto, in which Huon acquits himself of the imperial mandate. It was a true *jouissance* for me, as thou canst readily think. A few days after he acknowledged to me himself that perhaps in three years he might not come again into such a degree of receptivity and openness of every sense for an *opus hujus furfuris et farinæ*."

That Wieland does not exaggerate here we know from what Goethe later on wrote to Lavater:

---

\* The Duke.

“ As long as poetry remains poetry, gold gold, and crystal crystal, his ‘ Oberon ’ will be beloved and admired as a masterpiece of the poetic art.” (Goethe to Lavater, July 3d, 1780.)

29. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Merck.*

ETTERSBERG, the 2d Aug., '79.

Your letter, L. M.,\* the diary, to Thusnelda, of your journey, was received, opened, and read (to speak like Frau Aja) with a great shout of joy. L. M., you cannot think how infinitely you have obliged me, that after all your fatigues and adventures you have nevertheless taken your pen to show us that you think of Ettersburg. I feel it, yet not *à la Roche*; it lies deeper in my heart. You have seen the dear Sophie! † Spoken with her! O Merck, Merck! a sentimental journey! What, then, were my Marshal's ‡ feelings on seeing her? Was he not quite Yorick? Did not his sorrel horse appear to him in that moment as the unlucky Desobligeant appeared to the latter?

30. *Goethe to his Mother.*

My desire to see you once more has up to this time been held in check by the circumstances which made my presence here more or less necessary. But now an opportunity may present itself, in regard to which, however, I must, before all, ask for the strict-

---

\* Lieber Merck.

† Madame La Roche.

‡ Hofmarschall Einsiedel, who accompanied Merck.

est secrecy. The Duke has a fancy to enjoy the beautiful autumn on the Rhine. He wishes that I should go with him, and Kammerhr\* Wedel, and that we should alight at your house ; but, in order to avoid the friends at the fair, remain a few days only, and then continue on by water. Afterward he proposes that we should return and take up our abode with you, so as from thence to visit the neighborhood. Whether you take this prosaically or poetically, it is really the dot on the i of your whole past life, and for the first time I return to my home well and happy, and with all possible honor. But as I should like, since the wine has turned out so well on the mountains of Samaria,† that there

---

\* Kammerherr (Chamberlain).

† "Since the wine has turned out so well on the mountains of Samaria." This is an allusion to a passage in the Bible which was of great comfort to Goethe's mother, at a time when her son was dangerously ill. The Frau Rath was accustomed (as was very common in her day, and is not uncommon in ours) to resort in times of anxiety to the Bible, and to take as an oracular message the first passage which should meet her eye on opening it. Goethe thus writes to Frau von Stein, on the 9th of Dec., 1777: "It is just about this time, a few days more or less, that I, nine years ago, was ill unto death. My mother then, in the exceeding need of her heart, opened her Bible, and found, as she afterward told me, this passage: 'Man wird wiederum Weinberge pflanzen an den Bergen Samaria, pflanzen wird man und dazu pfeifen.' (They shall again plant vineyards on the mountains of Samaria; they shall plant and pipe thereto.)" The Frau Rath interpreted this as an assurance of her son's recovery. We give a *literal* translation of it from the German, as, in the English version (Jeremiah 31: 5), there is nothing said of piping, without which Goethe's allusion would be unintelligible.

In regard to the preceding letter Dünzer remarks: "Seldom indeed has to so loving a mother such happiness been granted as this letter must have brought to Frau Aja. Her belief in her

should be piping also, I will hope for nothing less than that you and my father should have open and feeling hearts to receive us, and to thank God, who in such a manner lets you see your son again, in his thirtieth year. As I have withstood all temptation to slip away from here, and to surprise you, I wish to enjoy this journey fully to my heart's content. The impossible I do not expect. God has not willed that my father should enjoy the fruits so ardently longed for, which are now ripe; He has taken his appetite from him, and so it must be. I will gladly ask nothing from that quarter but whatever demeanor the humor of the moment may suggest to him.\* But you I would see right joyous, and would wish you such a good day as you have never yet known. I have everything that a man can desire—a life in which I daily educate myself, and daily grow—and I come this time well, without passion, without perplexity, without vain stirring, but like one beloved of God, who has passed the half of his days, and hopes out of past sorrow much good for the future; and has also proved his heart for future sorrow. If I find you happy I shall return with joy to the labor and toil of the day which await me. Answer me immediately in full. We come, at all events, in the middle of September; the details

---

Wolfgang and his destiny had not been brought to nought; he who had left his native city in the perplexity of passion had manfully fought through it at Weimar, where he was blessed with the love and honor of the best and noblest, and he had ripened to true repose of soul without forfeiting the bold spirit and the fresh glow of youth." (Dünzer. *Frauenbilder aus Goethe's Jugendzeit.*)

\* The Herr Rath had become much broken in mind.



you shall know, down to the smallest particular, as soon as I have a reply to this. But inviolable secrecy, for the present, toward my father, Merck, etc. Our arrival must be a surprise to all ; I depend upon this. No one here yet suspects anything of it. The 9th Aug., 1779. G.

How I have planned our quarters, and what we need, etc., shall all follow in my next letter, when you have first written me your ideas.

### 31. Goethe to his Mother.

Such a reply I wished from you, dear mother. I hope it will all prove very pleasant and delightful. So, then, more particular information of our coming. We are to arrive about the middle of September, and remain with you a few days, very quietly. For, as the Duke does not wish to see his aunts and cousins who will be at the fair, we shall go right on, and float down the Main and Rhine. When we have completed our tour we come back and take up *in forma* our quarters with you. I shall then call to mind all my friends and acquaintances, and the Duke will go to Darmstadt,\* and visit a few of the nobility in the neighborhood. Our quarters will be arranged as follows : For the Duke, a bed will be made in the little room, and the organ, if it still stands there, moved out. The large room remains for visitors and as an entrance to his apartments. He sleeps on a clean sack of straw, over which is spread a fine linen sheet

---

\* Viz., to see his aunts and cousins.

under a light coverlet. The chimney-room will be prepared for his servants, a mattress-bed placed in it.

For Herr v. Wedel the back gray room will be made ready, also a mattress-bed, etc.

For me, above, in my old rooms, also a sack of straw, etc., as for the Duke.

As to eating, you will prepare dinner for four, no more nor less, no cookery but your domestic *chefs-d'œuvre*, in the best manner ; whatever fruit you can procure mornings will be well.

It reduces itself, therefore, to this, that the first time we come, we surprise every one, and a few days will pass by before we are noticed ; in fair-time this is easy. Take all the lustres out of the Duke's rooms. They would look ridiculous to him. The wall-candlesticks you can leave. In other respects, everything neat, as usual, and the less ceremony apparent the better. It must seem to you as if we had thus lived with you ten years. For servants provide one or two beds up under the roof, where our people are. Your silver place out for the Duke's use, hand-basin, candlesticks, etc. He drinks no coffee or anything of the kind. Wedel will please you very much ; he is better than any you have yet seen of us men.

So, then, still a deep silence, for as yet not a soul here knows a word. Write me whatever occurs to you. I will reply to everything, that all may be thoroughly prepared.

Merck is not yet to know anything.

(The above letter is without date, but assigned by Dr. Keil, from its contents, to August, 1779.)





Elizab. Goethe.  
Am 1<sup>ten</sup> September 1789

CATHARINE ELIZABETH GOETHE.  
*From Dr. Dorow's "Reminiscenzen."*

This visit took place on the 30th September, 1779. Goethe writes from Frankfort to Frau von Stein :

“ We arrived here on a most beautiful evening, and were received by many friendly faces. My father I find changed ; he is quieter, and his memory fails ; my mother has all her former energy and love.”

In the Merck correspondence there are also several allusions to the journey.

Fräulein von Göchhausen writes :

“ Long letters have come from Frau Aja about the visit to Frankfort, and all of them show her to be in a very rose-colored mood, in which may Heaven long maintain her. The old gentleman's appearance, which you set forth with a few touches in so masterly a manner, highly delighted me. It must have mightily pleased him that his son, the Privy Councillor, showed the Duke in Frankfort.”

Madame La Roche writes : -

“ May their journey be as fortunate as the plan of it is sensible and natural. The amazement \* of everybody—nobles, merchants, and landlords—is certainly very great, for we have actually reached that point where the simplest thing causes more astonishment than the most inexplicable caprice. . . . I grant Frau Aja with all my heart the inward satisfaction which this visit must give her. Mothers' joys are among the sweetest on earth, and I may well say that there is, perhaps, no mother living who so fully deserves these joys as Frau Göthe.”

---

\* Viz., at seeing a Duke staying at the house of a simple citizen.

32. *Carl August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, to Frau Rath.*

BASLE, the 2d Oct., 1779.

With the month of October we entered Switzerland. . . . We came over and saw the beautiful plain about Basle, the Rhine, and the lofty mountains in the distance. I write this to you, dear Frau Aja, to show that we have come thus far from Frankfort well, and looking well. The strengthening effect of your old wine, and especially the very admirable influence of your never-to-be-forgotten roast venison, have rendered us excellent aid on our knightly expedition. Your good and friendly reception, and your care for us in Frankfort, have given us fully the necessary endurance, and restored the lost strength. Believe, indeed, dear Frau Räthin, that I am and ever shall be very grateful for the great kindness which you and the Herr Rath have had for us. Believe also, and this without all doubt, that I value and love you as much as any one. Commend me to the Herr Rath, and keep well, that on our return we may have the same pleasure in you. Adieu.

CARL AUGUST.

33. *Wieland to Frau Rath.*

DEAR MOTHER : Two words only with the *Mercury* which comes herewith—namely, 1000 thanks for the frequent proofs of your good and affectionate remembrance, and *aviso* that all you have given me up to this time, for my lady Duchess Mother has been rightly delivered. To-morrow the wall-candlesticks also will probably arrive.

Our dear wanderers are probably now with you

again, and are resting from their labors. I look for its doing us much good to see them again. They have made a beautiful excursion, and good angels have been with them, and have, as we hear, driven all the elements before them. We have often been uneasy here on their account, while they on their Alps had the best weather one could desire. Altogether, we know nothing here of all the lauded splendors of the present autumn in your neighborhood; since the middle of October, or rather since the beginning of it, we live almost continually in an atmosphere of clouds, fogs, rain, and wind.

“Oberon,” meantime, advances on his way, and it must fare ill if, on next Shrove Tuesday evening at precisely eight o’clock, I should not have done with the last stanza of the fourteenth and last canto. Pray diligently for me in the mean time, dear mother, that the end may succeed with me as well as the middle and beginning. I shudder a little when I think that it needs only a single false step to break my neck on the way I am wandering. Yet,

“Was Du mit Glauben und mit Muth  
Begonnen hast, das helf ich Dir vollenden.”\*

Adieu, best little mother. I would give a finger from each hand if I could fly to you and read to you my X. cantos, which lie here before me.

Farewell, and keep in good, warm remembrance,  
your

. Faithfully attached son,

WIELAND.

---

\* In Sotheby’s translation it reads as follows :

“What thou hast well begun thou well shalt end :  
Here Oberon presents himself thy friend.”

All with me—wife, children, mother, in short, everything which has breath—is well, and praises the Lord and greets you.

(The above letter is without date. Dr. Keil assigns it to December, 1779.)

34. *Duke Carl August to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 19th M. (arch), 1780.

My well-beloved Commerzien Rath (Commercial Councillor) Paulsen wishes to let you see his face, and for this a letter to you from me must serve him ; thus I serve him, and he me. I cannot write you much, dear Frau Aja ; fine things that would sound well in some letters sound out of tune in mine. That I *love* and *honor* you, you know : I have therefore no need to say it ; but as the two words now stand here, let them so remain ; they mean all that could not be said in 3,000,000 words. Goethe, too, is well again, and better now, as it seems to me, than I have seen him for a long time. I supped with him last night, with a small company. Your picture and the father's, by Melchior, parade in my mother's cabinet ; if yours were only better, that one might look at it more ! I have, up to date, been roving rapidly about in the neighborhood here ; it is nearly a week since I first began to be quiet. Goethe cultivates so much the more quiet, industry and work. If all were so easy to me as to him, I would gladly do what he does. His Swiss drama \* will, I think, soon be brought out ; to-day

---

\* "Jery und Bätely."



there is a rehearsal of the music which von Seckendorf has set to it. The new theatre will now soon be ready. Merck *has* written : it is spoken of as of some old tale which we are still glad to hear, but of which we see nothing but the records ; that is, he does not write at all any more. I know not why. But greet the old fellow, dear Frau Aja, and challenge him formally. Give him a couple of bottles of 19\* to drink at your house, in the yellow room, to the health of the old company ; he has it indeed for nothing, as his old maxim runs, and perhaps it will arouse his spirit and make him fond of writing. Now farewell, best mother Aja, and greet the father. God keep you.

CARL AUGUST, H. Z. S.  
(Herzog zu Sachsen).

35. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 9th June, '81.

It is long since I have written you, dear mother, and yet it is not forgetfulness or lack of that love which I have forever pledged to you. The few new events which have occurred here were not worth telling you, and in order not to be monotonous and to weary you, dearest woman, I the rather kept silence. My son Constantin, who will bring you this letter, can tell you by word of mouth all about how it is with us here. You will find in him, dear mother, a young man who is not yet quite fledged,† but his heart is good, and I hope the journey he is now set-

---

\* The year 19, 1719.

† " Der noch nicht ganz flügge ist."

ting out on will make of him a good and useful man. The Legations-Rath Albrecht, who travels with him, has nothing pleasing in his exterior, as you will see yourself; but, on the other hand, he is an upright and very intelligent man, who has already travelled much himself, and in whom my son has great confidence, as well as he again is much attached to Constantin; so that I can in this respect be quite easy. Regard Constantin, dear mother, as the son of a mother who is, with her whole heart, yours,

AMÉLIE.

36. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

TIEFURTH, the 13th July, '81.

What shall I write to you, dearest Frau Aja? After you have been going about with Emperor, Archdukes, Princes, and devils of all sorts,\* what can further interest you? If I should tell you that I am living very happily here in the groves of Tiefurth, it would sound very small and insignificant in Frau Aja's ears; I could also relate that the much-loved Herr Sohn Wolff is well and hearty, that he has been on a commission at Ilmenau, and has made, besides, all sorts of little excursions, and has returned happy and well; but all this is too insignificant for you; one must talk with you in the high FF.† But alas! nothing happens here; not a single outlandish animal comes through Weimar, let alone an Emperor. Yet my heart tells me that Frau Aja, in the

---

\* Nachdem Sie mit Kaiser, Erbherzögen, Fürsten und allen Teufeln sich herum getrieben haben."

† Fortissimo.

midst of all enjoyment, has remained Frau Aja ; that she, after all, has cast side glances full of love and friendship toward those afar off, and is, and forever will be, the dear good mother. Amen !

Fräulein Tusnelde sends you herewith a portfolio which she has made with her own noble hand ; and that I may not come quite empty-handed I send you, dear mother, a pair of garters which I, also, have manufactured myself. I hope, dear mother, that you will see, at least, from this, how frequently we think of you.

Remain ever the dear mother, as I shall forever be

Your true friend,

AMÉLIE.

The Emperor Joseph II. arrived in Frankfort on the 27th of May, 1781. Although he was travelling incognito, under the name of Count Falkenstein, the street before his hotel was constantly thronged with people hoping to catch a glimpse of this very popular prince, and the excitement was general throughout Frankfort. The Emperor was at this time on a tour to the various German courts to select a wife for the heir apparent, the Archduke Franz. His choice fell upon Elisabeth, daughter of Duke Eugene, of Wirtemberg.

37. *Goethe to his Mother.*

The *Devin du Village* with Melchior's book came yesterday. Time and quiet has failed me as yet to reply to your previous dear letter. It gave me great

pleasure to see in it your old and well-known views again expressed, and to read them from your own hand. I beg you to be unconcerned on my account, and not to allow yourself to be perplexed by anything. My health is far better than I could previously hope and expect; and as it is adequate to enable me to do, for the most part, at least, what is incumbent on me, I have certainly cause to be content with it. In regard to my position itself, it has, notwithstanding great difficulties, very much, also, that is desirable for me, of which the best proof is that I can think of no other possible one for which, at the present moment, I would change it. For, with hypochondriacal discontent, to wish one's self out of one's skin into another, is not, it seems to me, very befitting. Merck and others judge very falsely of my situation, They see only what I sacrifice, and not what I gain; and they cannot comprehend that I grow daily richer while I daily give up so much. You remember the last period I passed with you before I came here; in such a continued state of things I should have gone to ruin. The disproportion of a narrow and slowly moving burgher-circle to the breadth and great mobility of my nature would have driven me mad. With my lively imagination and previous ideas of human affairs, I should yet have always remained unacquainted with the world, and in a perpetual childhood, which, mostly through self-conceit and all its kindred errors, is intolerable to itself and to others. How much more fortunate it was to see myself placed in a position to which I was in no direction equal, where I had ample opportunity, through many an error of mis-

conception and haste, to become acquainted with myself and others ; where, left to myself and fate, I passed through so many trials, which to many hundreds of men might not have been necessary, but of which I had, for my development, the utmost need. And now still, how could I, in accordance with my nature, wish for a position more fortunate than one which has in it for me something infinite. For were there developed daily in me a new capacity, were my ideas constantly becoming clearer, my active powers augmenting, my knowledge extending itself, my powers of discrimination being perfected, and my spirit becoming more active, I should yet find daily opportunity to use all these qualities, now on the large scale, now on the small. You see how far I am from the hypochondriacal restlessness which sets so many men at variance with their circumstances, and that only the weightiest considerations or very strange and unexpected events could induce me to leave my post ; and it would be also unjustifiable to myself, if I—at a time when the trees which have been planted begin to grow, and when one can hope for the harvest to separate the tares from the wheat—if I, on account of some discomfort or other, should go away, and deprive myself of shade, fruit, and harvest. Meantime, believe me that a great portion of the good cheer with which I endure and work springs from the thought that all these sacrifices are voluntary, and that I need only to order post-horses in order to come and find again with you the needful and agreeable of life. For without this prospect, and when, in hours of vexation, I am driven to regard myself as a bondman and day-laborer for the

mere necessities of life, many things would be much harder to me. But may I ever hear from you that your cheerfulness never forsakes you in my father's present condition. Continue to procure for yourself as much variety as the social life about you offers. It is not probable that I shall be able to leave here this autumn ; at all events, not before the end of September ; yet I shall try to be with you at vintage time. Write me, therefore, if it should, by chance, fall earlier, owing to the favorable summer.

Farewell. Greet my old, dear friends.

WEIMAR, the 11th Aug., 1781.

G.

There is a letter from Wieland to Merck, written some years before this, in which he expresses in his humorous way his attachment to Weimar. The passage reads as follows :

WEIMAR, the 16th April, 1777.

DEAREST FRIEND : I cannot yet forgive myself or forget that I have neglected you the whole of the last month in so unfriendly a manner. Forgive me for it, for the sake of sweet *Rosamond*, about whom I have made, *si diis placet*, a very edifying vaudeville, alias opera, for his Electoral Highness of Mannheim. I had the thing in my head the whole of March, to such a degree that I could neither think of nor undertake anything else. You admonish me to profit by the favorable breeze which seems to be wafting me toward the Neckar, and to leave this rugged country where no wine grows, where the water is good for nothing, and Eurus and Boreas render eight

months of the year as unprofitable as possible. Yes, dear sir, if that were only as easy as to move from one street to another—*pro primo*; and if the devil were not everywhere at home, *pro secundo*; and if there were not a hundred against one to be wagered that I should jump out of the frying pan into the fire, *pro tertio*. Besides, I do not yet well know how far good will toward me extends in M., although I can promise myself everything that is possible on the part of Hompesch.\* But granted they wished to have me, under what *specie* and *quo titulo* should I be? And what temporal advantages would outweigh the leisure, quiet, freedom, independence, esteem, affection, etc., which I enjoy here? It is true I count for but little here, and what I *am in sensu politico* is seven times less than what I count for. But I *do not wish to be nor to count for anything*, and precisely in this consists at least one third of my well-being. The princely personages here are, perhaps, the best in the whole world. They are all well disposed toward me, and none of them interfere with me; they ask so little from me that I am well nigh ashamed to eat their bread, and they would do everything to please me. Their Serene Highnesses of Gotha have very nearly the same sentiments toward me; and, besides, in the most disastrous event which might befall Weimar in the future, I can anticipate no cause of anxiety for myself. I sit tranquilly, therefore, under the trees of my garden; and would it not be hard that I should not eat the fruit of the 110 beautiful apple, pear, and cherry trees which I

---

\* Count Hompesch, Minister of State at Mannheim.

planted last autumn? . . . And now, *hisce omnibus probe pensitatis*, tell me frankly, should I not be greatly in the wrong to allow myself to be tempted by the garlic and onions of Egypt, or by singers and harp-players, or by fatter court-soups, or by the slight advantage of getting my wine two groschen cheaper, or by any other illusion of the flesh to leave my one-hundred-paces-long-and-fifty-paces-wide kingdom, paradise, elysium, or whatever I may please to call it—and solely because it lies in stupid Thuringia, and my cherries ripen only once in ten years.

But, as I said, it has not yet got so far that it is necessary for me to transplant myself. *Au contraire*, I am already, at the present date, on the way to quarrel *pour toujours* with the Palatinate. And can you guess why? Are there not sins which a poet cannot forgive, either in this world or the next? Now, only think; those people plague and badger me to write them an opera, and just as I get it done, it comes out that to their best actress, an angel in youthful charms and voice, they have given *leave of absence for a year*, to go on a pilgrimage to Paris and London, to dance in the planets, and to do Heaven knows what, and that they have now no *Rosamond*, and my little piece which, by the aid of the fair nymph Danzy would, could, and should have produced the greatest effect, will now go to the dogs for want of an actress who *looks* like a Rosamond, and *sings* like one. And I shall not go mad over it, and shall be willing to have anything more to do with such people? Farewell, then, forever, ye banks of my native Neckar! I seat myself here on



the banks of the little rippling Lotte, which flows not far from my garden, and make vain projects how I might make it flow through my garden ; and, if nothing comes of that, I will drink out of this self-same Lotte, forgetfulness of all operas and operanymphs, orchestras, courts, and Abderites\* in the world—that will be more sensible ! *E tanto basta.*

38. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

The 20th August, 1781.

DEAR SON : A few missing copperplates to the fourth part of your “Fragments of Physiognomy” oblige me, my dear friend, to trouble you. Perhaps you can help me out with them, and then receive my best thanks. That all with you are well I have learned, to my heartfelt joy, from young Kayser. With us it is so-so. I, for my part, am, thank God, ever as I was, well, active, and in good humor ; but the poor Herr Rath has for a long time been very much on the decline. His mental powers, especially, are entirely gone—memory, recollection, everything lost. The life he now leads is a true plant-life. Providence finds it even good to lead me through divers ways to the goal. That I suffer much therefrom I do not need to relate at length to a heart so full of feeling as yours, especially as I have no compensation in my children. All are indeed far, far away from Frau Aja. I had flattered myself with the hope that my son would come to

---

\* Allusion to his novel “Die Abderiten” (the inhabitants of Abdera), a satire upon provincial manners.

the autumn-fair, but nothing will come of it, he has so many occupations, so much to do all at the same time ; but as a slight amends he has written me a truly excellent letter.\* I must now possess my soul about it in patience. For the present here are lamentations enough. Keep me in good, loving remembrance, as I shall not forget you my life long (although you have not deigned to honor my face by saying anything about it in your four great books). Greet all ! I am forever,

Your faithful mother,

C. E. GOETHE.

39. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 23d 9bre, '81.

DEAREST FRAU AJA : I am able, with much pleasure, to announce to you that your beloved Hättelhanz has, in graciousness, resolved to hire a house in the town.† True, he will not move into it before Easter, because the lease of the present tenant runs until then ; meanwhile, dear mother, we have won half the battle, and it is good that it has got so far. I have also promised to procure him some furniture, because he is so very nice and good. You will accordingly have the kindness, dear mother, to send me some patterns of chintz for chairs and sofas, and, at the same time, the prices.

Herr Gevatter ‡ Wieland is very proud of your

---

\* The preceding letter, No. 37.

† Goethe had up to this time lived in his Gartenhaus. See Letter 3.

‡ The titles Gevatter and Gevatterinn mean literally godfather

loving remembrance : with great enthusiasm he cried out, That is a woman for me ! She is the ornament of her sex ! And I said *Amen*. He will send you a whole packet of Tiefurth journals. They are a little sport I made for myself this summer, and which has succeeded so well that it has been continued up to the present ; perhaps it will give you, too, a few pleasant hours. The authors are Hätselhanz, Wieland, Herder, Knebel, Kammerherr Seckendorff, and Einsiedel. The Frau Rätthin's world-renowned connoisseurship will enable her easily to guess the pieces by each author. Farewell, and be happy, dear woman.

AMÉLIE.

Our Wolff greets you a thousand times. He is very well, and good.

40. *Fräulein von Göchhausen to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 27th December, 1781.

I am sure, dearest mother that you in your life have had many and varied joys ; but whether you know any such joy as you have given me on Christmas Day, at least I wish it you ! Your silhouette, so like ! of such an excellent, dear, beloved woman ! in such a costly, pretty and stylish setting ; and your letter—O your dear letter !—could I only say how in-

---

and godmother. We have not, however, substituted those terms for them, as godfather and godmother, in English, imply a fixed relation, and are not used as mere titles of affection and courtesy, as they seem to have been in Germany at the time of this correspondence.

describably admirable the letter is ! Enough, dearest mother : from all my exclamations there is, alas, nothing further to be learned than that I am half out of my wits with excessive joy. The first day Goethe had much to bear from me, for I almost ate him up. By monstrous good luck there was on that joyous day a grand dinner at the Duchess's, and nearly half the town was assembled. I could, therefore, produce at once my splendid present (which will not so soon come off my so-called swan-like neck) ; and there was a questioning and a glancing at the beautiful novelty, and I was thoroughly wild, and people thought I must have had a gift of clear quicksilver.\*

Dearest woman, how shall I thank you ! how ever deserve so much goodness—so without all desert and worthiness on my part ! In return, I can, alas, do nothing, except to go on in my old jog-trot—love, honor, and obey you my life long. Amen !

L. GÖCHHAUSEN.

The Duchess greets you 1000 times, but will give me no further commission—for example, in regard to the chintz—until I have come again entirely to my senses ; for which, if there is not soon some change, she will shortly have prayers said in the church.

---

\* This seems a strange expression ; but, at that time, when any one showed a restless activity, they would say some one has given you quicksilver.





CATHARINE ELIZABETH GOETHE.

*See Letter 107.*

41. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

TIEFURT, the 17th 8bre, '82.

Since great minds—prophets,\* geniuses, and the like—have been entertained by you, one gets to hear nothing more, good or bad, from Frau Aja : everything is dead from there hitherward ! Accordingly, I venture only from afar off to tap on the door of the blue-room, and ask how the Frau Rätin may be : whether, now and then, a side glance is still given toward distant friends.

Should I come at an inopportune moment with my inquiries, and disturb you therewith in your meditations, pardon it on account of my longing to learn something of Frau Aja after so long a silence.

I might write many fine things from here : among others, that the palace of Herr Geheim Rath von Goethe is being splendidly adorned without and within, and that it will be one of the handsomest in the town of Weimar ; but what does this concern you—you who, probably, are busied with many sublime thoughts, in comparison with which such worldly stuff is utter folly ? I therefore content myself with adding nothing further, except that I commend myself to your spiritual remembrance, and hope soon for a sign of it.

AMÉLIE.

---

\* The prophet was Lavater, who had visited Frankfort during the summer.

42. *Frau Rath to Duchess Anna Amalia.*

FRANKFORT ON THE MAYN, 22d Oct., 1782.

MOST SERENE PRINCESS: What to the weary wanderer a resting-place, to the thirsty a clear spring, and all that one might now go on to add thereto; what poor mortals strengthens and refreshes—such was the gracious remembrance of our dearest Princess! Thou art not, consequently, yet fallen into oblivion: the dearest Princess thinks of thee still, asks after thy health. Thanks a thousand-fold for this be offered to your Serene Highness! Your Serene Highness is so gracious as to ask what I am doing. Oh, by Jupiter, as little as possible, and that little heartily ill, besides. But how is it possible otherwise? Solitary,\* left entirely alone to myself: when the springs are turned aside or stopped up, the deepest well will become empty. I dig, it is true, after fresh ones; but either they give no water or are turbid, which is, in either case, unpleasant. This noble allegory I might now continue on without end. I might say that in order not to die of thirst I am now drinking mineral water, which moreover belongs properly only to the sick, etc. Certainly, many fine things might be brought in here; but wit, wit!—I look upon it always as a draught of air; it cools indeed, but one gets a stiff neck from it. So, then, without all this idle talk, every pleasure that I now wish to enjoy I must seek for among strangers, out of my own house, for here it is as quiet and deserted as in a graveyard. For-

---

\* The Herr Rath died in May, 1782.



merly it was, indeed, wholly the contrary; yet since throughout all nature nothing remains in its place, but goes around in ceaseless revolution, how could I make myself an exception to this? No, Frau Aja has not such absurd ideas. Who will fret himself because it is not always full moon, and because the sun does not warm us so much now as in July? By only using well the present, and never thinking that it might be otherwise, thus one gets best through the world; and the getting through is, after all (everything well considered), the chief thing. Your Serene Highness will be able to make out tolerably well from the above that Frau Aja is always still about the same Frau Aja; retains her good humor, and does everything to keep in good spirits; also uses diligently the means which King Saul formerly found so approved against the evil enemy; and thus, according to human appearances, there is, for a long while yet, no fear for the good woman. Especially as Herr Tabor (whom your Serene Highness knows at least by name) has so magnificently provided for our amusement. The play for the whole winter! there will be fiddling, there will be trumpeting. Ha! I would like to see the devil who would have the courage to plague one with the blues: a single Sir John Falstaff puts him to rout: that was fun with the fat fellow. Christians and Jews all laughed away the gall from their hearts. This week we are to have Clavigo: all Frankfort is going—all the boxes are bespoken already—for an imperial city like this it is a great enjoyment. I have now humbly followed your Serene Highness's command—made a true and sincere report of my

being and not being. I commend myself now to  
further grace and favor, and am forever,

Most Serene Princess,

Your most humbly and truly obedient

Dienerin \* (servant),

GOETHE.

We cannot forbear adding a few lines from a letter of Goethe's, which seems conceived so thoroughly in his mother's spirit. It was written during illness :

“ To-day we have the most beautiful weather in the world. I allow myself no murmuring. The sun will still shine brightly when we lie in the grave : why should it fret us that he performs his duty when we must keep room and bed ? ” (Goethe to Frau von Stein, 27th June, 1785.)

43. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

FRANKFORT, the 5th January, 1783.

DEAR SON : The inclosure do not open until you have read this epistle. There are silhouettes in it, in regard to which some persons would be glad to know your thoughts. If you do not find this advisable, send it back unopened. I do not know where they come from, still less whom they represent ; yet they have been sent me by persons whom I could not refuse. Thus it happens to us when people know that such lights of the world are our friends. I stand in great consideration also

\* See note I, Letter 21.

among your fellow-believers, truly without any merit or worthiness of *mine*; yet what matters that? the moon, too, shines with borrowed light, and for all that I know of, no poet, from Klopstock to Neukirch, who has not be-sung and be-rhymed her. I thank you heartily for the book you have sent; it gives me many a refreshing and pleasant hour, as indeed everything that comes from you. For this I assert, that of *all* whom I know (although there are many good men among them), no one stands so in favor in my heart as you. God's richest blessing for the New Year upon you and all belonging to you. Hold me dear, and believe that I am forever,

Your true friend and faithful mother,

GOETHE.

44. *Frau Rath to Johann Heinrich Merck.*

The 21st Febr., 1783.

WELL, DEAR SON: You also will have shared in the great joy which now animates all Weimar.\* I, for my part, was as if out of my wits. For, just think: not to know a word of the interesting situation and all at once such joyful intelligence! I can swear that for a long, long time I have not been so blissfully happy. But, L. Fr.,† why do you not send me the "Iphigenia?" Longer than four weeks ago I begged you for it. And also not a single word of reply! I hope that you are not ill, as little that you have forgotten me. Let something be

---

\* The birth of a son to the Duke, February 2d, 1783.

† Lieber Freund (dear friend).

heard from you soon, and it will heartily rejoice her who is and remains your true friend,

C. E. GOETHE.

45. *Frau Rath to Duchess Anna Amalia.*

The 1st March, 1783.

MOST SERENE PRINCESS: I am indeed a very happy and enviable woman, to stand in the recollection and favor of an *Amalia!* of a Princess who, in every respect, is truly a Princess; who has shown to the world that she can govern; who understands the great art of attracting all hearts; who diffuses love and joy around her; who, in one word, was born as a blessing to mankind. So, then, our dear Hereditary Prince is well—a thousand thanks to God for it! I should never forgive Wieland and my son if they did not, at this joyous event, ride lustily their Pegasus; and I heartily long to see their productions. To be sure, it seems to me as if my son had quarrelled with the Muses about something; yet old love never rusts: they will, at his call, be soon again at hand. With Wieland it is indeed far otherwise: he is an ever-constant lover. The nine maidens may laugh or look sour; he accommodates himself to all their caprices; and I know, from a trusty source, that anything of this kind these ladies take extremely well. Your Serene Highness is so gracious as to inquire how I am. I am very well, thank God; happy and light of heart, and seek to make my little bit of life as agreeable as possible. Yet I do not like any pleasure that is attended with disquietude, confusion, and fatigue; for quiet I loved at all times, and

to my body I pay very willingly the honor due. In the morning I attend to my small housekeeping and other matters; letters also are then written—such a ridiculous correspondence no one could easily have, except me. Every month I put my writing-desk in order, but I can never do it without laughing. It resembles heaven inside of it. All distinctions of rank abolished—high and low, righteous and publicans and sinners all in a heap. A letter from the pious Lavater lies quite without ill-will beside one from the player Grossmann, etc.

In the afternoon my friends have permission to come and see me; but by four o'clock they must all be gone, for then I dress myself, go either to the play or make visits, and come home about nine o'clock. This is now about what I do. Yet the best I had nearly forgotten! I live in the long streets which have been built for readers,\* etc.

May your Serene Highness be content with the description of my insignificant way of life, and keep for me your inestimable favor. This is the single request of

Your Serene Highness's  
Most obedient and faithful servant (Dienerin),  
GOETHE.

---

\* Allusion to Goethe's "Das Neueste von Plundersweilern":

"Besonders eine der längsten Gassen  
Hat man für Leser erbauen lassen,  
Wo in den Häusern, eng und weit,  
Gelesen wird zu jeder Zeit."

"And especially one of the longest streets has been built for readers, where reading goes on at all hours, in houses large and small."

46. *Frau Rath to Duchess Anna Amalia.*

MOST SERENE PRINCESS: The evidence, by letter, that your Serene Highness still continually favors me with your gracious remembrance delighted me above all expression. In the midst of the great world, in the circle of her lofty and noble kindred, amid the enjoyment of the most exquisite pleasures, our dearest Princess thinks of Frau Aja, who is living along so entirely by herself. Most gracious Princess, my whole desire, demand, and wish tend solely to this: to make myself in *something* only worthy of this great favor. But what else can such a woman as I do, except to return thanks out of the fulness of her heart, and most humbly to solicit the continuance of such gracious favor. In the full belief that this request will find a favorable hearing, I will, in joyous mood, and with a happy heart, relate and report, in the most faithful and best manner possible to me, what your Serene Highness desires to know. Surely the good God will not let me sink so low as to write for a journal. No, no! God forbid! Thank Heaven, I know better how to drive away *ennui*, and to live happily through my days without lowering myself. I should have known nothing at all of the whole silly trash had not Frau Max Brentano sent me the prospectus. I should take the whole thing for a satire were it not dedicated to the Princess Elisabeth, and had not all the post-offices been plagued with it. We have here a few such poor wretches whom the Evil One and their stomachs have probably led astray into such scribbling. This is all I know of this charming rarity.

That my son pleased the most Serene Duke of Brunswick touched very softly my motherly heart. It fares with me well nigh as with the old knight whom Geron der Adeliche came upon in a cavern, who lived solely by this, that the spirits brought him so much good news of his grandson Hector.\* What life-balsam I have again received just during the present fair! Now God be forever glorified therefor! Your Serene Highness has the kindness to ask me what I am doing, how I am. I am going on, ever in the old way—well, happy, cheerful, and joyous, especially in this splendid autumn and glorious weather. On the 3d was the great Bacchus festival. That was a jubilation and merriment, and shouting! Grapes! Such as in Canaan, and in overflow and abundance besides; in my little vineyard far more than a butt. But there was also endless roast pork!!! Philip † was so fortunate as to share in the whole pleasure, etc.

From this account your Serene Highness can see that I am in excellent spirits. For the full measure of my happiness I beg from your Serene Highness, our dearest Princess, the continuance of your grace and favor toward one who is her life long,

Most Serene Princess,

Your most humble and most faithfully  
obedient Dienerin (servant),

GOETHE.

FRANKFORT, the 5th October, 1783.

---

\* Allusion to Wieland's poem, Geron der Adelige :

“ What from time to time  
The spirits tell me of him is the food  
That will not let me die.”

† Goethe's servant, apparently on a visit at Frankfort.

47. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FRANKFORT, the 9th January, 1784.

DEAR SON : Many thanks for your dear letter ; it gave me great pleasure. You are faring right well, then, with my son. Oh, that I can very well imagine. Goethe was ever a friend of good young people, and it gives me uncommon pleasure that associating with him makes you happy. But the more you love him—and therefore, I am sure, would be unwilling to part from him—the more surely will you believe me when I tell you that my absence from him often causes me sad hours. You, my little friend, might now do a great and good work ; especially as you love me it will certainly not be disagreeable to you. Listen, dear friend, to my proposition.

Since you are constantly with my son, and consequently know more about him than any one else, how would it be if you were to keep a little diary, and send it to me every month. It need not, indeed, give you much trouble—only something in this way : “ Yesterday Goethe was at the play ; in the evening invited out. To-day we had company,” and so on. In this way I should live, as it were, among you, should rejoice in your joys, and absence would lose much of its unpleasantness. A little line written morning or evening would not give you much trouble, but would be indescribably grateful to me. Just reflect upon the matter ; I believe it may be done.

When my son comes some time to Frankfort, you must come with him. There shall then be no lack of amusement ; at least, I would dispose everything



for enjoyment. Now, some time or other this may take place. In the mean time hold me dear; I promise you the same. Greet my son, and be assured that I am ever

Your true friend and faithful mother,

ELIZABETH GOETHE.

---

There is a fragment of an autobiography by Von Stein, from which we gather some account of his relations with Goethe :

“ My father,” he says, “ was Master of the Horse at the court of the Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar. Partly through the detentions and journeys connected with his service, and partly through his fondness for society, he was not much at home, and had no great influence over his children. He was in the habit of dining at the Duke’s court, and he never supped, so that he was seldom to be seen. My mother was by birth a von Schardt, and sprang from the Scotch family Irving. She was almost always at home, and gathered about her cheerful society, through which also entertainment was not lacking for us three children. My second brother, Ernst, became page to the Duke, and our mutual tutor, Küstner, governor of the pages. I was sent with my brother, and there arose from this a somewhat straggling mode of life, since I was so much left to myself; and although I, on the one hand, learned in this way early to take care of myself, yet precision in my studies suffered very much. From the Duke’s pages, whose society much delighted me, I learned many ill-habits. With all my heart, on the

contrary, I clung to my mother, and almost more still to Goethe, who at that time visited my parents' house almost daily, and met me with love, earnestness, and jest, as the occasion might demand ; so that I consider his behavior toward children as a model of its kind. At that time he took me with him on a journey to Dessau and Leipsic, by means of which I much enlarged my ideas. I was about nine years old when Goethe took me to himself into his house, which I may call the happiest period of my youth. I endeavored by my exertions to deserve the love with which he fulfilled my various little wishes. By dictation he endeavored to improve my imperfect handwriting, and, to give practice to my readiness in reckoning, gave over to me his housekeeping books and accounts to keep. I made several little journeys with him, especially to Ilmenau and the county of Henneberg, where he had the direction of a mine, which in the sequel failed, and about which he gladly and fully instructed me. This good fortune had only lasted two years when Goethe went on a journey to Carlsbad, and thence to Italy, without having confided it to any one except the Duke. I still remained almost a half year in his house, because his return was continually expected, but at length returned to my parents, as it was too lonely for me in his house."

48. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 12th Februar., 1784.

DEAR SON : That is very good indeed that you have so kept your word. The diary is just right, and

has exceedingly rejoiced me. Do me the favor to send every month such a description of your life and occupations: the separation from my son will be, by this means, infinitely easier to me, because I shall in spirit enjoy with you all that is done in Weimar. I beg you continue on in the same way, and you shall be my dear, dear son. The drawing of your room came in good order; it lies on my work-table, and, in thought, I am very often with you. There is not much new here that would interest you. We have the play this winter only every Tuesday. The players are in Mainz, and snow and ice render the roads exceedingly bad. Greet my son many times, and believe that I am evermore

Your faithful mother,

E. GOETHE.

49. *Duchess Anna Amalia to Frau Rath.*

WEIMAR, the 22d Febr., 84.

DEAR MOTHER: He who comes slowly, still comes.\* I wanted to give myself the pleasure to send you, dear Frau Aja, for the 19 Febr.,† some pretty work made in Weimar, but, unfortunately, it is but just now done; yet receive it, even now, with love, just I send it to you with a friendly heart, together with my best wishes for the continuance for long years of the best and fairest happiness. In regard to the money-purse, which was made by my own hand, you will, I hope, kindly overlook its de-

---

\* "Wer langsam kommt, kommt auch." Fair and softly goes far.

† The Frau Rath's birthday.

fects. A little picture, which lies in it, is to remind you, now and then, of a person who sincerely loves and values you.

Our winter amusements are very good ; the theatrical company is not to be counted among the poor ones, and gives us many a pleasant evening. The snow still lies very deep here. How the earth looks is unknown to us, since it has been covered with a white mantle for two months, so that many people complain of pains in the eyes.

How do you like, dear mother, the journeys in the air? \* Would that not be a pleasure, if Frau Aja could be transported in the air and sing at my house in Siefurth? "aus Lüften hoch da komm ich her!" (From high in the air I come). What a joy would that be!

The Herr Sohn has gone to Ilmenau on mining affairs. They wish to seek for silver mines, and make Weimar rich thereby ; may God grant his blessing ! How did Wilhelm Meister please you ? It will, without doubt, be another masterpiece from

\* Montgolfier's balloons were then attracting universal attention. Everybody was experimenting with the new discovery, and great was the delight when any one succeeded in sending up into the air one of the little bladders filled with gas, which are now so common as a toy for children. In this same month Wieland writes to Merck of a successful experiment of the Duke's, as follows :

"This evening the Duke sent up in his mother's house for the first time *cum successu*, a little balloon made of a bladder. It flew to the ceiling, and endeavored to bore through, but as this was impracticable, they, at length, showed it the way out at the door ; it flew up the staircase, and mounted to the garret. Hallelujah ! I did not see it myself, but it is said to have been very pretty to see, and the ladies and gentlemen of the Court enjoyed it greatly."

our Herr Wolff. There is life in it. He is a Prometheus who creates for himself his own little world.

Adieu, dear mother, I kiss you a thousand times. Hold me dear, as I ever shall be yours,

AMÉLIE.

50. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 22d March, 1784.

DEAR SON : Your letter, the description of the journey to Ilmenau, the printed speeches, the flowers, the sketches of the miners, and, altogether, everything that you have written me besides, has rejoiced me very much. No ; I have never yet had such a dear, diligent correspondent ; it will be a great pleasure to me if you will have the kindness thus to continue. The least occurrence which you report has more charm for me than anything else which may happen in the wide world. It is the truth that we have had here very high water ; that of 1764 was a joke to it. Our city is divided into fourteen districts ; three remained exempt, the eleven others were in great distress. My cellar is now in the finest order again, and, thank God, there is not the least thing injured, and to show that my Oberon wine\*

---

\* Allusion to Wieland's Oberon, II., 47, where Oberon gives wine to Scherasmin.

“ Und als er ihn auf einen Zug geleert,  
Ist's ihm, als ob mit wollustvoller Hitze  
Ein neuer Lebensgeist durch alle Adern blitze.”

In Sotheby's translation :

“ But when his breathless draught had drained the bowl  
He feels, like lightning with forgotten heat,  
The dancing life blood in his arteries beat,  
And spirits gay reanimate his soul.”

is still well preserved ; six flagons will shortly arrive at my son's. Your seal is very handsome, how glad I shall always be when it comes in my sight ! My fairest and best wishes to your dear mother, to my son, to Gevatter Wieland. But you, my dear son, continue to communicate to me good tidings from time to time, you will thereby much oblige her who is evermore

My dear son's faithful mother,

ELIZABETH GOETHE.

51. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 30th March, 1784.

DEAR SON: You cannot think how your silhouette has delighted me. Now I can, at least, form an idea of my dear correspondent. I thank you for it very much. It would be very agreeable for me if you were to go with my son to Eisenach, for then I should also learn what may occur there, and I read your letters with great pleasure. I wish from my heart that the everlasting snow would cease for once, that you might enjoy yourself in your little garden ; with us it is still severe winter ; to-day hardly any one can go out of the house on account of the terrible snow and wind. A few days ago there went up in the air a small air-balloon two feet high, it was droll to see. For to-day, I must close, the post is going, and I am sorry to leave unanswered a letter from you, my dear son, but a little is always better than nothing ; be assured that I am unchangeably

Your faithful mother,

ELIZABETH GOETHE.

52. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., on the first Easter holiday, 1784.

DEAR SON : I wish very much that you were now with me. Day after to-morrow our play begins again, and, besides, an entirely new piece will be given, *Kabale und Liebe*, by Schiller, the author of *The Robbers*. Everybody wants to see it, and the house will be very full. My best thanks for your dear and very pleasant letter and for the weekly paper. It rejoices me very much that you are willing to begin the diary again, yet I by no means ask that you should inconvenience yourself, for when one is on a journey, or at other times, things occur; then, as a matter of course, writing must wait. Herewith I send a little fairing, and hope that it may please you. Greet your mother, my son, and all good friends from her who is unchangeably

My dear son's faithful mother,

E. G.

53. *Frau Rath to Duchess Anna Amalia.*

FRANKFORT, on the 13th June, 1784.

MOST SERENE PRINCESS : Hofrath Bode was a very agreeable Bote (messenger) to me,\* for he brought good tidings of our dear Princess, and such a gracious, charming little letter, which gave me the joyful assurance that remembrance of me is still green and flourishing with a Princess whose favor and good wishes I value above everything in the world. Your Serene Highness has the kindness to

---

\* "Hofrath Bode war mir ein gar lieber Bote." This is a pun.

ask how it is with me. Thank God, ever still in the same old way ; that is, being interpreted, well, happy, in good spirits, and so on. To be sure, in my situation, this is, indeed, no great art. But yet, for all that, it depends more on an inward contentment with God, with myself, and with the rest of mankind, than directly on the outward circumstances. I know so many people who are not at all happy, who make to themselves their little bit of life so sour, and, for all their gloom and their undesirable mode of being, fate is not in the least to blame. In discontent then lies the whole fault. Your Serene Highness will pardon me this moral broth ; \* it is, besides, not precisely in my line, but within a short time I have become the confidant of various persons, who all consider themselves unhappy, and yet there is not a word of truth in it. Consequently, their vexation and torment make me sorry for the poor souls, and so on. The terribly long winter makes one doubly sensible of the joys of spring. I, too, dearest Princess, enjoy as much as is ever possible the magnificence of beautiful nature, and the exquisite image of our dearest Princess accompanies me in all the joys of life. I should only like once more to enjoy the good fortune of seeing the original, so dear to me ! Is there, then, no probability at all of this—no possibility ? Son Wolff, also, does not come ; and yet there come from east and west, south and north, figures which might stay away. All this, indeed, belongs to the miseries of the time. How is, then, my dear, gracious Fräulein von Göchhausen ?

---

\* “ Diese moralische Brühe.”



The dear fräulein seems to be somewhat shy of ink, an ill which often attacks me too. May I humbly beg you to present my friendly greeting, and to add how heartily I long to appear before her eyes with the splendid nosegay? \* God grant that it may soon occur, Amen. I commend myself in all submissiveness to further favor, and remain until the grave,

Most Serene Princess,

Your most humbly faithful, most obedient servant (Dienerin),

GOETHE.

54. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 2d July, 1784.

DEAR SON : I recognize, in your last letter, all your friendly feeling toward me ; it would give me also great pleasure to see you and my son ; but it is in no wise practicable ; travelling was never my forte, and just now it is almost utterly impossible. It would be too much at length for me to mention all the circumstances which prevent me ; and you, my dear son, would after all not comprehend me, because you do not know the details of my situation. Providence has already granted me many an unexpected joy, and I have the confident belief that many more such await me, and to see you and my son here belongs certainly among the very greatest ; and I am sure my hope will not be confounded. Keep her in good remembrance who is unchangeably

Your faithful mother,

E. G.

---

\* Birthday gift from Fräulein von Göchhausen.

55. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FRANKFORT, the 9th September, 1784.

DEAR SON: Although you would have received this letter sooner through the post, yet I could not refuse the bringer of it, who begged me very much to give him something to take with him. I thank you with all my heart for the description of your person, so dear and interesting to me; especially it rejoices me that you already know so well what is good in you and what not. Bravo, dear son! that is the only way to become noble, great, and useful to mankind. A man who does not know his own faults, or does not wish to know them, will in the end become insupportable, vain, full of pretension, intolerant—no one will be able to endure him, even were he the greatest genius. I know striking examples of this. But the good that is in us we must also know; this is just as necessary, just as useful. A man who does not know what his value is, who does not know his own ability, and, consequently, has no belief in himself, is a simpleton who has no firm step and footing, but goes forever in leading-strings, and *in seculum seculorum* remains a child. Dear son, keep in this good way, and your excellent parents will bless the day of your birth. It is a great proof of your love and friendship that you ask for an exact description of my person. Herewith I send you two silhouettes. To be sure, in the large one the nose is a little too strong, and the small one is too youthful, yet, with all that, there is much that is correct in them. I am in person rather stout and rather corpulent; have brown eyes and hair, and would ven-

ture to think that I could well personate the mother of Prince Hamlet. Many persons, the Princess of Dessau among the rest, maintain that no one could fail to see that Goethe is my son. I cannot quite make it out, yet there must be something in it, because it has been so frequently maintained. Order and quiet are leading traits of my character; hence I do everything at once, right off-hand—the most disagreeable always first—and swallow the devil (according to Gevatter Wieland's wise counsel \*) without looking long at him. When all, then, lies again in the old folds, when everything uneven is again smooth, then I bid defiance to any one who would surpass me in good humor. Now, dear son, come some time and see all this for yourself. I will take all pains to procure for you joy and pleasure.

Be assured that I am evermore your true friend  
and faithful mother, E. G.

56. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FRANKFORT, the 23d December, 1784.

DEAR SON: Do not, on any account, believe that I had forgotten you; that is not at all my habit. The cause of my not writing for the present lies in the short days. I cannot without injury to my health write immediately after dinner, and, just as little, by

---

\* Herr Gawin war dem Zaudern gram,

Er denkt: "wer sich den Teufel zu verschlucken  
Entschlossen hat, muss ihn nicht lang begucken."

WIELAND, "Sommermärchen."

Herr Gawin was no friend to delay. He thinks: "Whoever has resolved to swallow the devil must not look at him long."

candlelight. In the morning it is not day before half past eight, and by the time I am dressed, and have the rest of my affairs in order, it is mid-day, one knows not how ; should morning visits occur besides, which happens not infrequently, writing is entirely omitted. I am convinced that these reasons are obvious to you. Now, further, I have received safely the drawings, and thank you for them. I will also help to pray that her Serene Highness \* may be brought happily to bed. The Lord Duke is still in Darmstadt, and diverts himself with the hunt. He came through Frankfort, and I had the pleasure of entertaining him in my house at a breakfast. I am much more fortunate than Frau von Reck. That lady must travel about in order to see Germany's learned men ; they all visit me in my house, which is by far more commodious. Yes, yes, those to whom God is gracious He blesses in their sleep. † Dear son, firmly convinced that you prize my good-will above my deed, I send you herewith something from our Christmas bonbons, with a purse, because its fashion and color seemed to me pretty. We have snow here also ; that, now, I like very well ; but such high water as last year I will pray to have averted. Farewell. Greet your dear mother, my son, Herder, Wieland, Bode, and so on, from

Your faithful mother,

E. G.

---

\* Duchess Louisa, of Saxe-Weimar.

† "Ja, ja, wem's Gott gönnt, giebt er's im Schlaf." The Frau Rath probably had in her mind the passage in the 127th Psalm, which reads, in Luther's translation, "Denn seinen Freunden gibt er es schlafend." (He blesses His own while they sleep.)

57. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 16th May, 1785.

DEAR SON : During this fair the weather was cold and very unfriendly, and it is not yet particularly agreeable. On the 16th April the joy and pleasure of the whole city was near being turned into mourning and lamentation. Fire broke out after midnight in the splendid new play-house, and had help come a half hour later all would have been lost. The Director has lost everything—brought off nothing but his life, and those of his six children. But in such cases, may God honor my Frankforters, three collections were opened at once, one by the nobles, one by the merchants, one by the Free Masons, and brought together a fine sum. His children, too, got so many goods, clothing, etc., that it was a pleasure to see. As the disaster had spared the theatre, performances were resumed three days after, and, in fact, with *Der deutsche Hausvater* (*the German father of a family*), in which Director Grossman plays the painter capitally. Before it began the curtain rose, and he appeared in his half-burned coat, with his head and hands bound up, which had received severe injuries, and made a speech, which I send you herewith. His six children stood about him in miserable clothing, and cried so, all of them, that one must have been of wood and stone not to have cried with them ; indeed there was not a dry eye, and in order to encourage him and to convince him that the public had pardoned his carelessness, they applauded him by shouting “ Bravo ” and clapping hands.

I have related to my son the particulars of my illness ; it was a severe cold, but now I am right well again. Farewell, and greet my son. I am evermore  
Your true friend,

E. G.

---

The eight letters which follow relate to a visit of Fritz von Stein to his " dear mother " in Frankfort. Among them is one from Fritz himself, the only one of his to the Frau Rath which has been published.

The novelties of the day were Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and balloon ascensions.

The Frau Rath at once nicknamed her little friend Cherubino, and delighted him with the music of the *Countess and the Page*.

About the balloons, to the surprise of her son, she seems to have been less enthusiastic, in spite of the great excitement in Frankfort over Blanchard. When the latter returned to the city after his ascension of the 3d October, 1785, he was received with the wildest enthusiasm. His carriage was drawn by men to the theatre, where he was led from box to box amid universal congratulations. On the stage his bust was crowned in a Temple of Fame, while Graces and Loves advanced, singing couplets in his praise, to place the laurel upon his brow. He was presented with gold snuff-boxes, watches, medals, and money ; and twelve German princes and princesses who chanced to be at Frankfort subscribed for a balloon capable of carrying fifty persons, to be ready for the next coronation.

58. *Goethe to Friedrich von Stein.*

One is so much occupied here the whole day, although nothing really is done, that I have not yet been able to write to thee.

I have received thy letter, and am pleased that the Herren Straube are willing to take thee with them to Frankfort. Thou must thank them for it at once, and accept it in the manner it was offered.

We have climbed many mountains and shall bring with us for thee, too, many stones and ores. Herr v. Knebel greets thee, thy mother also. She is very well.

There are a great many people here, also a few creatures of thy age. Every one comes with his little jug, early in the morning, to Sprudel,\* and partakes of the hot water.

I am well, and hope thou art so. Distribute many greetings from me.

G.

CARLSBAD, the 13th July, '85.

59. *Goethe to Friedrich von Stein.*

I am very glad that thou hast arrived safely, and been well received. Think often of the precepts of old Polonius, and thou wilt continue to get on well.

Write but something every day, that we may know what thou art about. Thy mother is in Kochberg and thy father here. I am very much alone, and in the mean time am unpacking the Carlsbad stones.

---

\* Hot spring at Carlsbad.

Greet my mother, and relate to her a great deal.

As she is not so grave as I am, thou wilt fare better with her. Enjoy the good fruit, and greet all repeatedly from me.

G.

WEIMAR, the 5th September, 1785.

60. *Friedrich von Stein\* to Frau Rath.*

DEAR GODMOTHER: I have arrived here safely, and now I will tell you about my journey. We did not set out Tuesday evening until 8 o'clock, although at 6 o'clock you gave me your parting blessing. In Hanau there were no horses to be had, so we slept there the whole night, and the next morning at 6 o'clock we were conveyed on, and for our whole journey to Eisenach we had none but tired horses. We got there Thursday evening. Friday we remained at Eisenach and arrived Saturday night at 1 o'clock. On coming into the town we found two houses burned down. Your son greets you heartily. I owe you many thanks for all the kindness you have lavished upon me. I shall always owe you hearty thanks for it—hearty thanks, dear godmother. Many people think I have grown stout. I can well believe it, for you have fed me so well, better than the Countess did Cherubino. Your son was very much astonished that you were such a philosopher about the balloon. I thank you once more. All greet you.

FRIEDRICH.

WEIMAR, the 3d October, '85.

---

\* Twelve years of age.



## 61. Goethe to his Mother.

You have shown me many kindnesses, dear mother, this year, for which I heartily thank you. The kind reception of dear Fritz and the care for him gives me pleasure as something done wholly out of love for me. You will find that he is a charming child, and his narrations are now giving me great pleasure. If one, after the manner of Swedenborgian spirits, wishes to look through the eyes of others, one would do best to choose children's eyes for that purpose; he has arrived with Hr. v. Niebecker, safe and well.

Thank all friends from me. To Riese I write myself. Farewell; very soon I shall send something amusing. What effect have *The Geschwister* produced?

G.

W., the 3d Octbr, 1785.

---

On the 6th October, 1785, Goethe writes to Frau von Stein :\* "I must, then, wait still until next Wednesday, and the days will pass silently by unless Fritz should be noisy. He is merrier than ever before. He has in Frankfort first rightly learned to know freedom, and my mother has first fully taught him the philosophy of a cheerful life. Thou wilt be astonished to see how much he is improved in every respect."

---

\* Goethe's "Briefe an Frau von Stein." Edited by Schöll.

62. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 20th October, 1785.

MY DEAR CHERUBIM: Your so fortunately completed journey and the detailed description of it gave me much pleasure. It also delighted my inmost heart that my dear Fritz has me in good remembrance. But I forget just as little, my dear good son. Everything reminds me of him—the pears which tasted so good to him early in the morning while I drank my tea; how we, after that, had ourselves rigged up, he by Sachs, I by Zeitz, and how, after the powder-gods were done with us, there began a dressing and an adorning, and then the *vis-a-vis* at table, and how I at two o'clock chased my cherubim off to the fair (truly sometimes rather rudely), and how we met again at the play, and the bringing home, and then the *Duodrama* in the hall, where the stout Catharine held the light, while Greineld and Marie represented the audience—-that was always capital fun. Herewith I send you a faithful, true, and detailed description, signed by wearers of stars and order-ribbons, of the air-balloon, which first exploded but afterward flew up in the air to the delight of all Christendom, together with all the king-klang and sing-song, amusing to read and devout to contemplate. For the rest I am well, and shall to-day see Count Essex beheaded. Yesterday the serene Saul was on hand and delighted everybody; but, good God! what does not one see in noble Frankfort! Heaven keep us thereby. Amen. May you live happy and fortunate; this is my wish, and it will ever be grateful to the heart of

Your faithful friend and godmother, E. G.

63. *Frau Rath to Frau von Stein.*

FR., the 14th November, 1785.

GRACIOUS LADY, DEAREST FRIEND : I was very glad that your son was so pleased with his stay with me. I have done everything at least to make my native city agreeable to him, and rejoice that I have been successful. True, I have the grace from God, that as yet no living soul has ever left me dissatisfied, of whatever rank, age, or sex. I love human kind, and old and young feel it. I go without pretension through the world, and that pleases all earth's sons and daughters. I demoralize no one, always seek to spy out the good side, and leave the bad one to Him who created man, and who best understands how to smooth off the sharp angles ; and by this method I find myself well, happy, and content ; with which I have the honor to remain and to commend myself most respectfully to further goodwill and friendship, and to subscribe myself, gracious lady,

Your most obedient servant and friend,

ELIZABETH GOETHE.

P.S. To your husband, as well as to both your sons, my best compliments.

64. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 10th December, 1785.

DEAR SON : That is good, that you still think of me. I and my friends also, dear Fritz, have not forgotten you, and never will. We have, this winter,

three public concerts, but I go to none of them ; at least, I am not a subscriber ; the grand one which is given on Fridays is too stiff for me, the Monday one too poor, the Wednesday one gives me ennui, and that I can have more comfortably in my own sitting-room. During the four weeks of Advent we have no play ; after New Year's we are to have a company from Strassburg. The director is named Koberwein. For the rest I am, as ever, in good spirits ; that is, after all, the chief thing. In my little household everything goes on the same as you saw it, only as it pleases the sun to stay longer in bed, so it pleases me too : before half-past nine I do not come out of the feathers. I cannot see, either, why I should fatigue myself—quiet, quiet is my felicity ; and since God grants it me, I enjoy it with thankfulness. Every Sunday I dine with Frau Stock ; in the evening come Frau Hollweg Bethmann, her mother, Demoiselle Moritz, Herr Thurneisen, Herr Graf, and we play quadrille, l'hombre, and so on, and enjoy ourselves greatly. On other days also the good God bestows something, and thus one wanders through the world, enjoys its little pleasures, and pretends to no great ones. Farewell, dear son, and hold her dear who calls herself

Your faithful friend,

E. G.

65. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 18th December, 1785.

DEAR FRITZ : To keep myself snugly in the memory of my dear son, and that he may not forget his good mother, I send him, herewith, a little remem-

brance ; at the same time come the two favorite songs ; and as I do not know whether the German Figaro is in fashion at Weimar, the ballad follows also. Dear Fritz, do you still remember how we sang together, and were so cheerful and merry over it ? “*Fröhlichkeit ist die Mutter aller Tugenden,*” \* says Götz von Berlichingen, and he is surely right. When we are contented and happy, we wish to see everybody pleased and cheerful, and we do everything to conduce to this, within our sphere of activity. As everything here is now going on very quietly, I can find nothing at all amusing to write ; I therefore do better to copy off Figaro’s song. I wish you pleasant holidays, and am and remain

Your true, good friend,

E. G.

66. *Frau Rath to her Grandchildren.* †

The 13th January, 1786.

DEAR GRANDCHILDREN : I am very glad that my Christmas present has given you pleasure. I hear, too, the whole year, from your dear mother, that you are clever and good girls. Continue so—nay, become still better as you grow ; obey your dear parents, who certainly seek your welfare ; thus you will give joy to us all ; and it is very charming

---

\* “*Götz von Berlichingen,*” act i. scene ii. Brother Martin says, “*Freudigkeit ist die Mutter aller Tugenden,*” Joyousness is the mother of all virtues.

† These were Schlosser’s children, Louisa and Julia, by his first wife, Cornelia Goethe ; Henrietta and Edward, by his second wife, Johanna Fahlmer.

when, in return for all the pains of your bringing up, your parents, grandmother, and other friends are pleased with you. With the knitting-bag I am much delighted; I take it with me to all companies, and tell of my Louisa's skill and industry. You must now teach your brother Edward to run about nicely, so that when the spring comes he can jump about with you in the garden; that will be fun. If I were with you I would teach you all sorts of games, as bird-selling, hunt-the-handkerchief, potz schimper, potz schemper, and many others besides; but the G.'s must know all these just as well; they are great fun for children, and you know indeed that your grandmother likes to be merry and to make others merry.

Now God keep you this year well, happy, and gay, which will heartily rejoice

Your faithful, loving grandmother

GOETHE.

67. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 25th May, 1786.

Ei! Ei! my dear son! You seem to be really vexed with your godmother! But first hear my excuses, and I wager all enmity will be at an end. It is true that I have not answered two of your letters; but, dear friend, it was fair-time! Friends and acquaintances took up all my time. Herr Kriegsrath Merck was here every day, the celebrated poet Bürger, Reichardt from Berlin, and other less important mortals. Writing was not to be thought of; and what I now do I do against the order of my

physician, who, with the whey-drinking (which I am now following), has forbidden all writing; yet to appease my dear son I will write, after all, in spite of the whole medical faculty. The 8th May was a joyous day to me as well as to Goethe's friends—"Götz von Berlichingen" was performed. I send the play-bill herewith. You will perhaps still remember the people whom you saw on the stage while you were here. The appearance of Brother Martin, Götz before the councillors at Heilbronn, the bullet-casting, the battle with the imperial army, the dying scenes of Weislingen and of Götz, produced great effect. The question, "Whence come you, most learned Sir?" and the reply, "From Frankfort on the Main," raised such shouting and applause as was joyful to hear, and the way in which the Prince (for here and in Mainz bishops are not allowed on the stage) sat there in stupid ease and said: "Potz, then the ten commandments must be in it too," the greatest grumbler must have laughed. Summa Summarum! I had a hearty enjoyment in the whole performance. Now, dear son, are you once more at one with me? This is after all a tolerably fair letter for a woman to whom writing is forbidden. We are again good friends and in this hope I subscribe myself as

Your true and faithful friend,

E. G.

P.S. Tuesday, the 30th May, at the request of the Hereditary Prince of Darmstadt, *Götz von Berlichingen* is to be again performed. Potz, little Fritz, that will be sport!

68. *Frau Rath to Lavater.*

Early Sunday morning,  
at 6 o'clock, the 18th June, 1786. }

DEAR SON : The Princess of Würtemberg, mother of the Grand Duchess, is coming to-day to Offenbach to hear you preach. Her Highness begs you most politely through me not to be so very exact in mounting the pulpit, but to wait until she has come, which probably will be only a quarter of an hour later. The bell-purse\* may console the Offenbachers for this short delay.

Farewell ! A good journey to you. Hold her dear and in kind remembrance who is forever

Your faithful friend,

ELIZABETH GOETHE.

In the autumn of 1786, Goethe left Carlsbad, where

\* Alms were collected in a purse with bells attached to attract attention. The meaning probably is that the amount put in the purse by the Princess will make up for the delay she may cause.

We do not know what might have been the custom at Offenbach, but at Zürich it was the duty of the pastor himself to hold the bag. Goethe narrates how Lavater turned this circumstance to account for his physiognomical studies :

“On Sundays, after the sermon, it was his duty, as an ecclesiastic, to hold the short-handled velvet alms-bag before each one who went out, and to bless as he received the pious gift. Now, on a certain Sunday he proposed to himself, without looking at the several persons as they dropped in their offerings, to observe only their hands, and by them silently to judge of the forms of their owners. Not only the shape of the finger, but its peculiar action in dropping the gift, was attentively noted by him, and he had much to communicate to me on the conclusions he had formed.” (Autobiography.)



he had been passing a portion of the summer, for Italy. The journey was kept a profound secret from every one, the Duke alone excepted. His mother's first intelligence of it was this letter from Rome which reached her on the 15th November. It bore date 4th November.

The Frau Rath's reply to this letter is well known ; it was found in 1868 in the police archives at Vienna. Goethe's letter, on the other hand, was printed for the first time in 1877. It was found among the papers of Fritz Schlosser, and appears among the Goethe letters which have been collected from these papers.\*

*Goethe to his Mother.*

ROME, the 4th Nov., '86.

First of all I must tell you, dear mother, that I have arrived here safe and sound. My journey, which I entered upon in absolute secrecy, has given me great pleasure. I have come through Bavaria, Tyrol, by Verona, Vicenza, Padua, Venice, Ferrara, Bologna, and Florence, quite alone and unknown, and here also I preserve a kind of incognito.

What happiness I feel that so many of my life's dreams and wishes are being fulfilled, and that I now see in actual nature the objects which from my childhood I have seen in engravings, and of which I heard my father so often speak—this I cannot express to you.

All these things, it is true, I see rather late, yet

---

\* "Goethe-Briefe aus Fritz Schlosser's Nachlass," von Julius Frese.

with all the more benefit and a great deal in a short time.

How long I shall stay I do not yet know ; it will depend upon how matters are at home. In any case I shall return through Switzerland and pay you a visit, then we will enjoy ourselves together, but this must remain a secret between us.

To-day I have not time to say much ; I only wished you should speedily share in my joy. I shall come back as a new man, and live to greater enjoyment for myself and my friends.

The enclosed letter send to the Bethmanns without their knowing that it comes through you. The Bethmanns have opened a credit for me, without being aware of it, in an assumed name.

Write to me soon at length how you are, and also whatever news there may be ; in a foreign country everything is interesting that concerns friends and dear ones.

Also for my guidance tell me when this letter reaches you. Farewell, and keep me in love.

G.

---

Goethe's visit to Rome gave at first much uneasiness to the Austrian police. Here was the Duke of Saxe-Weimar's Minister of State concealing himself in Rome, under the name of Herr Müller. What had he come for? Spies were set to watch his movements. What they ferreted out may be found in the letters of Cardinal von Herzan, Imperial Ambassador at the Papal Court, to Count Kaunitz.\*

---

\* "Die theologische Dienerschaft am Hofe Joseph II.," von Sebastian Brunner.

The secretary of the Ambassador scraped acquaintance with Goethe at an inn. All he found out was that he lived mostly with artists, and refused to go into society. But the Cardinal was not satisfied with these meagre details. While Goethe had gone to Naples, the Ambassador writes to his chief: "I have directed my secretary, upon whose honesty I can rely, that on Goethe's return, which will probably soon follow, he must place himself in closer relations with him in order to be in a position to keep with security a watchful eye upon his conduct, and in case of need upon his secret intentions; whatsoever in consequence comes to my knowledge I shall have the honor to report to your Excellency without delay." They discovered that his letters to his Prince were under his own address—"To Herr Goethe, Privy Councillor to the Duke of Saxe-Weimar." He had also an active correspondence with various learned men, and with his mother in Frankfort; "a letter from the latter my secretary has got into his hands, and I enclose it herewith." Goethe received this letter, and it must have been stolen from his room.

"Tischbein, the painter, introduced him to his great friend and patron, the Russian Councillor Riefenstein; with him he often dined and was very intimate. Hirt, the antiquarian, who is often at the house of the young Prince of Lichtenstein, persuaded Goethe to allow himself to be presented to the Prince with express prohibition of all ceremony; he often afterward went there to dine. By this Prince he was taken to the Arcadian Society, where he was made member by acclamation, under the name of Megal-

lio ; from that time he allowed himself to be called Herr Goethe, or Privy Councillor Goethe."

The letter which follows is the one which the *honest* secretary "got into his hands." It was found in 1868, by Dr. Sebastian Brunner, neatly folded among the Archives at Vienna. A more harmless document has probably rarely found its way into a diplomatic correspondence. Fancy the wily Kaunitz meditating upon the Frau Rath's account of her life, which was flowing "quietly on like a clear brook," while she herself was "as happy as a goddess."

69. *Frau Rath to Goethe in Rome.*

FRANKFORT, the 17th November, 1786.

DEAR SON : An apparition from the other world could not have caused me more astonishment than thy letter from Rome. I could have shouted\* for joy, that the wish which lay in thy heart from earliest youth has now been fulfilled. A man like thee, with thy knowledge, with thy great glance for all that is good, great, and beautiful, one with such an eagle eye, a journey like this must make happy and fortunate for all the rest of his life, and not thee only, but all who have the good fortune to live within the sphere of thy activity. The words of the blessed Klettenberg will remain ever in my memory, "When thy Wolfgang goes to Mainz he brings back more knowledge than others who come back from Paris or London." But I would have liked to have seen thee at thy first sight of St. Peter's. However, thou promisest to visit me on the return journey, and then thou

\* Or "screamed." Dr. Frese calls this letter a Freudenschrei.

must describe me everything to a hair. About four weeks ago, Fritz von Stein wrote that he was in great perplexity on thy account ; not a soul, not even the Duke knew where thou wast ; everybody thought thee in Bohemia, and so on. Thy letter of the 4th November, so precious and interesting, came to me on the evening of Wednesday, the 15th, at 6 o'clock. The Bethmanns' letter I have juggled into their hands in such a droll way that they certainly will not guess it comes from me. Of my inner and outer well-being here follows an exact and faithful description. My life flows quietly on like a clear brook. Disquiet and commotion were never agreeable to me, and I thank Providence for my days. To thousands such a life would seem monotonous, but not to me ; the quieter my body is the more active in me are my thinking powers. Thus I can pass a whole live-long day entirely alone, wonder that it is evening, and be as happy as a goddess, and one needs not in this world more than to be happy and contented. The newest from thy old acquaintances is that Papa La Roche is no longer in Speyer, but has bought himself a house in Offenbach, and proposes there to end his days. The rest of thy friends are all still what they were ; not one has made such giant strides as thou. But "we were always the lackeys," the late Max Mohrs once remarked. When thou comest here all these people must be invited and handsomely entertained—game, roasts, poultry, like the sands of the sea, it shall truly be splendid ! Dear son, an humble doubt just occurs to me as to whether this letter may come into thy hands. I do not know where thou art living in Rome, thou art half *in conito* (as thou writ-

est). We will hope for the best, but before thou comest let something be heard from thee, otherwise I should be thinking every post-chaise brought me my sole beloved one, and hope disappointed is very disagreeable to me. Farewell, dear one, and think often of thy faithful mother,

ELISABETHA GOETHE.

70. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 17th December, 1786.

DEAR SON: Herewith I send you a Christmas present that you may continually bear me in mind. Yes, dear son, do this, think of one who ever with pleasure recalls the time when we lived together so many a joyous day. It is only a pity that everything passes so quickly by and that the joys of life are ever on the wing; for this reason one must never frighten them away by whims, but snatch them quickly, otherwise they are off and hasten and glide away into *Eia Poppeia*!\* Do you not yet know where my son is? That is a wandering knight. Well, he will some day or other appear and give account of his heroic deeds. Who knows how many giants and dragons he has fought, and how many imprisoned princesses he has set free! We will rejoice in anticipation of the relation of his adventures, and await with patience the unravelling of the plot.† There is nothing at all

---

\* Literally, bye, baby, bye. *Eia Poppeia* is the refrain to the lullabies which put German babies to sleep. The meaning of the passage may possibly be something like this: "Hasten and glide away into (eternal) slumber."

† It will be noticed that the *Frau Rath* says nothing about her

new here ; our free imperial citizens eat, drink, banquet, make music, dance, and divert themselves in all manner of ways, and as they enjoy themselves may God bless it to them. Farewell, dear son, and think sometimes also in the year 1787 of

Your true friend,

E. G.

71. *Frau Rath to Frau von Stein.*

FR., the 9th January 1787.

HIGH AND NOBLE LADY, EXCELLENT FRIEND :  
How many thanks I owe you for the communication of the so very interesting letters. I rejoice that my son's longing to see Rome has been fulfilled. It was from his youth up his daily thought, his nightly dream. The happiness which he must feel and enjoy in seeing the masterpieces of the old world I can fancy to the life, and I rejoice in his joy. His Serene Highness, the Duke, gave me a most agreeable surprise. My joy was great to see our dear prince well and happy. Herr von Knebel and Count von Lincker were his companions ; your brother was not with them. The letter so dear to me I received by a huntsman from Meiningen, who was sent through here to Darmstadt. I commend myself and my son most heartily to your and your husband's continued love and friendship, and remain with the greatest respect, high and noble lady,

Your most obedient servant and friend,

E. GOETHE.

---

letter from Rome. She does not wish to violate her son's "inconito."

72. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 9th March, 1787.

DEAR SON : Great and manifold thanks for the letters sent. It was to me a comfort, a cordial, and a joy to hear from the great distance such good news from my son. Beg your mother to please send me everything that reaches her and I shall be right heartily thankful therefor. Have no anxiety about their being copied ; no one gets a sight of them. You are, then, not of the opinion that my son will remain a still longer time away. I, for my part, gladly grant him to enjoy to the last drop the joy and happiness in which he is now living, and under so fortunate a constellation will he probably never see Italy again. I vote, therefore, for a longer stay there, provided it occurs with the Duke's consent. Greet my dear son Wieland, and the Herders, but especially your whole household, from her who is unchangeably

Your true friend,

E. G.

73. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 22d Febr., 1788.

DEAR SON : My best thanks for the Pandora and the Court Calendar. I have a letter of the 3d of this month from Rome, in which my son writes that about Easter he would let me know whether I shall get a sight of him this year or not. I think from this that it is still extremely uncertain whether he returns by Frankfort. That he is become cold toward his friends I do not believe, but put yourself in his



place, set down in an entirely new world, a world to which from his childhood he has clung with his whole heart and soul, and the enjoyment which he now has of it. A hungry man who has long fasted will at a well-spread table think neither of father nor mother, friend nor sweetheart, until his hunger be stilled, and no one could blame him for it. I must thank you once more for the Pandora ; it is the queen of all other calendars, almanacs, wreaths, and so on ; there are capital things in it. Farewell, and keep in good remembrance

Your friend, E. G.

74. *Frau Rath to Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Unzelmann.*

The 16th March, 1788.

Oh ! delude me not again ! Oh ! breathe not again upon the dead spark ! Leave me rather to my grief, which has reached such a height that it would be difficult to exceed it. In a storm the thunder announces at least the approach of the lightning, but here flash and peal were so in one that I shall always wonder that my senses did not on the instant all leave me. I truly know not if, after so many previous deceptions, disappointed expectations, my heart to hope which has so often, so infinitely often, deluded me, if I ever again shall open it to this deceiver ; or if it is not better entirely to repulse it, to let no more of its rays enter the soul, and to begin again my former plant-life, I say once more I know not. The pain I now suffer is unutterable. There meet me at every corner some of these confounded

people and renew every recollection, open every wound by their basilisk glances, seek and spy if sadness is to be perceived in my eyes, in order perhaps to rejoice over it, and when I think of the fair in which I have taken such a childish pleasure, how the boasting St. will regard me with malicious joy—and I can on that point so little dissemble; I know not what I shall do or leave undone. But one thing I know, this generation of vipers shall be banished from my house, no drop of tyrants' blood\* shall pass their lips, no hand will I lift in their honor or for their entertainment; in short, every vexation I can put upon them I will do with joy. I will argue, Bürger's Frau Schnips shall be a child to me, for air I must have or I shall stifle. Do not venture again to call F. my friend; it is degrading to me. She was *never* so and *never* will be; I am not so lavish of my friendship; very different persons from *such an one* have courted it and been graciously sent away. The secret so kindly communicated to me I shall keep as a precious treasure with which I have been intrusted; no one, not even Töffel, shall know it. I shall regard it not so much as a hope (for I am done with that), but as a sort of promise. I am apprehensive in regard to your coming here, you can easily conceive why!!! To-morrow I send out dunning letters to all my tardy debtors and then will remember you.

Your

ELISABETH.

P.S. To the Frau Gevatterin† my friendly greeting.

---

\* Allusion to the old wine Frau Aja set before the Stolbergs with the remark, "Here is the true tyrants' blood." See Introduction.

† His wife.

Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Unzelmann, born 1753, died 1832. A celebrated actor, who was for four years (1784 to 1788) a member of the theatrical company at Frankfort. During his residence at Frankfort he became very intimate with the Frau Rath, who, as will be seen by the letters which follow, prided herself that she had by her friendly interest contributed much to his success there. Unzelmann was at this time at the neighboring city of Mainz, and during his absence it had come to the knowledge of the Frau Rath that he had got involved in debt in Frankfort, and was in danger of being pursued by his creditors. This is the cause of the Frau Rath's anxiety and distress, which in the above letter occasionally obscures her syntax.\* In regard to the Frau Rath's letter to Unzelmann, Vichoff remarks that they "bear in places the stamp of an enthusiastic affection, and show whence the poet of the "Sorrows of Werther" inherited the vivacity and fire of his emotion."

75. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 21st March, 1788.

Must then well-nigh always the few happy moments I enjoy in your society be so terribly embittered to me. Think how much pain it gives me that my best intentions are continually frustrated—my ill-fortune lacks now but the final blow, that you should be disgraced by your creditors here. I beg you, by all that you love and hold dear, *do not come* until the affairs are arranged in one way or another ;

---

\* See Düntzer, "Frauenbilder," etc., page 511.

it would be my death. Take counsel of the excellent Count Spaur. Place your and the Frau Gevatterin's wardrobe in safe keeping under the Count's care ; you play no more here, so that people will not know or see the deficiency—in Berlin still less—for you told me yourself that you had no need to trouble yourself about your wardrobe there, of what use is it then to take all these things with you ? They shall not be lost to you, and at this critical moment it would at least be a help ; your two friends, the Count and I, gain time to consider, for at the present moment it is to me impossible. Reflect upon it with the Frau Gevatterin. My God ! your honor is more concerned to go away as an honorable man than to have one pair more or less of bedizened robes ; only do not let the Jews cheat you, and take counsel in whatever you undertake with your generous friend. I am convinced he will give you the best advice. You know well that he who gains time gains everything. Write to me if it will do, and how. But do not come here (I say it once more), under penalty of my displeasure, until I can be easy. Should the Count wish to correspond with me about this affair it would be an honor to me, for four eyes see more than two. My friendship toward you will *never* waver. One must only devise ways and means that all parties may be satisfied, and that one of them be not too much oppressed. Weigh everything prudently and let me soon hear better news—this will exceedingly rejoice and strengthen

Your truly distressed friend,

ELISABETH.

P.S. Greet the Frau Gevatterin in my name, and I beg her to make with us every exertion, that your enemies may not triumph.

Koch is not here yet. There is great uneasiness. No soul knows what is to be played on Tuesday.

*76. Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

Read this entirely alone by yourself.

In the place where you did not go once more, out of groundless fear, although you had promised it, they are very angry with you. Satisfaction will be demanded from you. In what it will consist I do not know. If you give it, all is forgiven, and you come back at the time (which you know) with honor. But if you do the contrary, you will be published in the newspapers, publicly disgraced, and there will be no return to be thought of.\* It is to be hoped that you will be mindful of your best interests and not bring yourself and your friends to shame and misfortune. A watchful eye is kept upon the correspondence of your friends; the letters will therefore be posted under other addresses until all is arranged and in order. When you, therefore, wish to write to the two friends you have in this place, address the letters to our faithful Töffel, but designate the street where he lives, for he has many of kin to him by name. For the rest, what your friends here at this time have suffered, may fate never let you experience in a similar case! We entreat you to make all right again by doing what is demanded of you, in the place you know of, other-

---

\* Refers to some difficulty Unzelmann had got into with von Dahlberg, the intendant of the theatre at Mannheim.

wise we are forever lost to you, and you to us. Everything else another time. It is no longer the moment to talk and write. In the place where you now are you must not say a word, neither of this letter nor of all possible letters that may come, nor of their contents. Farewell.

The 22d April, 1788.

P.S. Let the address to Töffel be done by your Frederica, that they may not see your handwriting. Send me back the enclosed as soon as you have read it.

This correspondence does not begin remarkably. God grant that it may be better in the sequel !

77. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 29th April, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND : Your letter from Leipzig and the one from Berlin I have read with pleasure, for from both is clearly to be seen that you have not yet forgotten our good city and your friends ; it would, indeed, be unjust in you, for may fortune smile on you in other zones ever so kindly, yet you will never regret to have lived and been with us four years. The day you left I sent to your lodgings the stout Iris with a splendid warm cake, some tyrants' blood, and a very well-expressed farewell letter, but a compassionate Oread called out of the wooden partition (for there were no rocks), "He has forever fled from thee !" But what did Ariadne do ? That you shall presently hear. She did not behave so very wildly and angrily ; the Eumenides, the Furies were not disturbed, and hell heard no word of the whole story.

Had poor Ariadne of Naxos lived in our enlightened age, where all joy and sorrow, all feelings of grief and pleasure, are forced into systems, where the passions, if they would appear in honest company, must have stiff stays on, where laughing and weeping is allowed only up to a certain degree, she would surely have managed her affairs differently. True, it is somewhat troublesome always to wear a mask and always to appear different from what one is, but, praise God, this is not necessary with you. I can say to you that your going away has caused me much sorrow, that my hobby\* is utterly ruined, that at table the time seems intolerably long—in one word, that my romance lies at the bottom of the well, and will hardly be pulled out again. It is also not to be concealed from you that I am often bitterly vexed with you that your ambition, your mistaken fancies, have drive you away from here, since one now sees just the contrary of it all. . . . Our dear good friend Heinrich, I think, represented the affair of our correspondence as somewhat more hazardous than it was. You will have received my first through Herr Lantz, but let me know where you live, so that letters need not be sent through a third person. How do matters stand in Mainz? Will those persons soon be conciliated? Our friend there preserves a deep silence. Farewell, and continue to think of the friends you have left behind, and remember her who, even into Charon's boat, is

Your friend,                      ELIZABETH.

P.S. My best compliments to the Frau Gevatterin.

---

\* The theatre.

Unzelmann was now in Berlin. From the cake and wine sent to his lodgings, it would appear that he had been again in Frankfort, in spite of the Frau Rath's warnings. But what with debts and jealousy of the other actors, his situation had become so uncomfortable that the Frau Rath lent him money (as afterward appears) to go to Berlin until his affairs could be arranged; hardly, however, had he got there before he signed a contract with the Berlin Theatre for ten years.

78. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 9th May, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND: So it is then decided that you, through your false and thoroughly misplaced pride and ambition, will deprive yourself of the love of your tried friends, and precipitate yourself into misfortune. Has your fervid, passionate, hot-brained temperament not yet caused you trouble enough? Will you never follow the counsel of true and trusted friends, friends to whom you owe many, many thanks? Will you in the Mainz affair, also, again follow your head, which has already so often done you ill service? In God's name do as you will. But if you bring the honored Count into the affair, if you so abominably misuse his generous confidence, then is this the last letter that you in your life ever get to see from me, for a man who not only so soon forgets the greatest benefits, but even breaks his word to his friend, he cannot be my friend. You consider that it would be injurious to your honor if you were to ask pardon of Dahlberg. To ask pardon does not



the slightest injury to honor, for to err is so very human, and what reasonable man will then be ashamed to say, "I have erred"? Does not this, indeed, occur daily? Is this anything, then? On this point your honor is truly very ticklish, but your friends who have helped you out of a mortal fright, who were the cause that you could go away as an honorable man (for then, then was your honor at stake), to injure these friends, that is consistent with your honor. Truly with a man who has such singular principles it is not easy to argue. But of how little value my friendship is to you I also see now so clearly that my eyes smart at the sight. God grant that you may fare well in Berlin. May He bestow on you friends such as those you have here left behind! But for this a four years' trial is requisite also, and performances such as those in which I saw you here more than once. We will wait: it will be seen in the end. Unzelmann! once more I beg you to consider the matter maturely before you venture on the dangerous step. For if you come forward openly, contend against Dahlberg, you are, whether you win or lose, forever lost to *us*, and a prudent general is always glad, after all, to keep a retreat open. You will now have received two letters from me which were addressed to Herr Inspector Lantz, one also from the Count to me; send it, please, back to me. As I have not yet received a line of reply to my two letters, this would not have been sent for. In certain things I too am proud, but I did it for the Count's sake, from whom I have received a truly heart-moving letter. On the 12th May it will be three years since you left us and went to Cassel, but then, hope was the great watch-

word, and now!!! others enjoy the fruits which we have so carefully fostered and cared for, and that *gives too much pain!* I hope and believe that you will not have lost in your short absence all feelings of friendship; such an ungrateful spirit I do not attribute to you. Put yourself, then, for a moment in the place of your friends—a friend whom one has loved and cherished, for whom one has done everything, everything for the present and the future, in order to make his days happy and joyous—and this friend, for a whim, ruins plans, hopes, and happiness, himself bars the way ever to see us again. He who over certain things does not lose his reason, he has none to lose.\* But that you may not think I have written all this out of a woman's caprice, read the enclosed letter (which I beg to have back), and judge for yourself. I had got so far when your letter of the 2d May came. I thank you for it, for at least it gave me some comfort; but so long as the affair with Mainz is not settled, I would not give a nutshell for all hopes. Koch has been to see me and told me with tears in his eyes how amazed he had been by your sudden departure. You had been together at Tabor's, had supped together; he had accompanied you home, had begged you when you came back from Mainz to sign a contract for next Easter—everything would have been so nicely arranged. Death could not have more startled him than your sudden departure, and, he continued, "even if I did not so value him and his wife, as I actually do, yet we need

---

\* Words of the Countess Orsina in Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, Act IV., scene VII.

them. We should have got along and have engaged no new people, at least for a long time," and so on. "God forgive it the calumniators, who have put things in his head about me of which not a syllable is true. I play no doubt some of his parts, but his cast of parts is so varied, he will everywhere come upon people with whom the same is the case." . . . .

Now I have talked enough of you. One more word of myself. My rage for the play is about at an end; neither from my box, once so dear to me, in the play-house, nor among the players, nor among the mutes, do I see what I once saw, and when it occurs to me that it will remain so always and forever, and that there is little probability of the contrary, it seizes me in the breast, so that I think my breath is lost, and then ever anew comes to mind the letter. (Oh! Elisabeth what have I done?)\* Yes, indeed, you might well have had some little regard for your friend and for the future. My only consolation is that you are doing well there, and that you after all will never wholly forget her, who has given you so many proofs that she was, and is, and remains

Your friend,

ELISABETH.

79. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

Written on the second Whitsuntide holiday, ill in body and soul, sent off the 13th May, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND: I am not to make myself uneasy, not to fret; I must rely on the future! I! who

---

\* Probably the letter in which Unzelmann announced that he had signed a contract at Berlin for ten years.

clearly and plainly see that everything so tends as to remove you from us forever. As often as a newspaper comes in my sight my limbs tremble lest I find your name mentioned in it in some dishonoring way ; and should there be but the slightest menace, the least defiance contained in the letter of your commission, the misfortune is certain, and you are forever lost to us. A confinement to your house would have been by far, far less disgraceful for you ; how few people would have heard of it ! But newspapers, which fly about the whole world, which are read by people great and small, in places where every child knows you—such a thing goes beyond everything ! And then the talk in all societies, and your friend in the midst of it, what shall she do, or what part shall she play ? Have I not already suffered enough on your account—forgiven, borne, endured ?—and now, beside, this horrible of all horrors ! O Fate ! how have I deserved this ? My intentions were so good, so upright. I wanted to contribute to a man's success, and did precisely the contrary. Had I left him what he was, he would be still with us—of that I am as firmly convinced as of my own existence. Forgive, dear friend, that my letters are of no better and pleasanter purport ; toward you I cannot and would not dissemble. You must allow me to disburden my heart ; this proof of friendship I indeed deserve, do I not ? For three days I was in bed ; to-day I arose with the hope of receiving a letter from you, but none came. It is the second holiday ; everybody is walking and driving. I sit alone in my sitting-room, and know not how better to employ my time than in writing to you. Were you here, I know well that a little bot-

tle of tyrants' blood would be enjoyed. But those times are past. This noted sitting-room has indeed driven many a shade from your brow ; it was a sort of asylum when the winds roared, and thunder rolled in the air ; it was indeed a safe haven when the little boat was driven round and round by the waves. Do you still remember the snuff-box I sent you to Cassel, three years ago, on which a man in the midst of a shipwreck was climbing up a rock, and the words which I wrote with it ? Now, you have again gone to sea. God grant you ever to find a safe port, where you can cast anchor. . . .

Writing is indeed a capital thing, especially to a friend, only it is a misfortune that such a letter takes seven days to reach its destination. So far have you never yet strayed from me as now, and your return could at least be reckoned by marking the days. Dear friend, one thing, only, I would like to know ; did you, then, not think of me at all when you signed the contract there ? also, not at all of the consequences and of the effect such a thing must necessarily have upon me ? Yet, by heaven, you knew it all ! That has always been to me the most incomprehensible part of the whole affair, and still is so, for I confess to you such a step would not have occurred to me in a dream. Stock and his wife send their best greetings. Likewise Elise Bethmann, although you took with you two pairs of her husband's stockings ; also friend Thurneissen. By no means tell friend Heinrich that I send you any of his letters, otherwise he might not write me any more. Greet the Frau Gevatterin,

From your friend,            ELISABETH.

80. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

TUESDAY, the 27th May, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND: It is a great fault of mine that I think more on the past than on the present, and that I cannot yet entirely blot from my memory the ideas, dreams, and fancies which I had taken into my head about you. Out of this troubled spring have still flowed my last two letters. But I hereby solemnly promise you for the future to banish all jeremiads from my letters, especially since your enemies, instead of serving you ill, have served you well, and have driven you into the midst of good fortune. Such an honor would you and the Frau Gevatterin have not have met with here, even had you played like angels; the Royal Family be thanked! The Burgomeister here would not have done it. Altogether, Berlin seems to me to be the place where you, at length, will be happy. I beg you, therefore, by all that you love and value, do not again thrust this good fortune from you. Fate is not always so well disposed that when one door shuts another immediately opens; my consolation then will ever be, that I, at least, laid the corner-stone upon which other greater and more skilful architects may now build. This little vanity\* you

---

\* We infer from the testimony of the celebrated actress, Henrietta Hendel-Schutz, that it was not all vanity on the Frau Rath's part, to claim some share in Unzelmann's success. The actress alluded to "declared that her early attaining to truth to nature, in the exercise of her art, she owed, in great part, to the sharp and incisive judgment of this excellent woman, and especially to her constant warnings against trying to do too much, as well as against every kind of affectation."—(Vichoff, *Goethe's Leben*).

will not take ill in me, for it makes me happy. . . . Dear friend, you have probably forgotten that I, upon solicitation, and even on friend Heinrich's security, have employed my credit to raise 76 Louis d'or for your journey; this must be paid in July, for my honor and pledged word are above everything to me. I cannot and will not, therefore, enter into anything further of this kind. About Frau Bethmann's stockings, it was a joke. I sent, immediately, two pairs of new ones in return—from her I should not wish any present just now. We have the play here four times a week. It gets on as well as it can. To me it is now all the same whether they play *Hanswurst im Schlafrock* (*Jack-Pudding in his Dressing Gown*) or *Don Carlos*; but I must, also, not be unreasonable; when one has ridden a hobby for twelve years, something else may, one day, take its place—in the world nothing, indeed, stays forever on the same spot. We are to have the happiness of seeing your good king. I must surely look at him; it is indeed worth a drive to Hanau! Greet the Frau Gevatterin, and tell her she is a quick witch in supplanting the poor theatre-ladies. But they can console themselves with this, that this ill-luck has not befallen them alone, but they have company in certain persons who have experienced the same, and had, also, to resign themselves to it. Farewell. May you be happy and fortunate! But do not in the splendid royal residence utterly forget poor Frankfort, but think sometimes of your friends, especially of her who calls herself

ELISABETH.

81. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 24th June, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND: Ill I am not, just now, in the real sense of the word, but sad—out of humor—hopeless—cast down; this is, for the present, my lot, and the cause of my not writing. If Orsina\* is right, that the unhappy like to cling to each other, then the contrary is equally true, that the happy, even with the best heart and will, cannot sympathize with the feelings of the unhappy. A poor man will never feel more strongly the burden of poverty, will never be more discontented with his lot, than in the society of the rich man; there, there his want depresses him, there doubly humbles him; and every word, be it ever so innocent, ever so unimportant, will appear to him as scorn, and as satire upon his poverty; every smile will seem to him a mockery of his misery, for he who is unhappy is never just—sees everything through a colored glass—judges everything ill. My own experience, my present feelings give me the guaranty that the foregoing illustration is exceedingly just and appropriate; for, dear friend, you may well believe that some of your letters have so depressed and saddened me that I had difficulty to rise again. . . . From this you can see how ill-tuned are the chords of my nature, and that I, for this reason, did not write, in order not to cloud your good humor—not to disturb your happiness. In the Mainz theatre (I can no longer say in ours here) there is, at Easter, to be a truly great change. It is

---

\* "Die unglücklichen ketten sich so gern an einander."  
(*Emilia Galotti*, Act IV., scene VII.).



said Herr von Dahlberg has undertaken everything, and Tabor has nothing at all more to say or do ; his rule in Mainz is at an end. But how it will now fare with us I know not—do not trouble myself about it either. My delight in the play is over, and *all* is past ! Herr Widemann must now be with you, and Herr Frankenberg will very soon come to you ; by them you can best and more thoroughly be informed of the matter ; also, what new in operas and plays has been given since your departure. In the old times to write such a dramatic chronicle would have given me great pleasure ; but good humor is requisite for it—a happy heart—hope which rejoices body and soul—activity of spirit which gives life to the dead letters. But this is impossible to the dead (which, morally, is now my case). The play-bills I have all duly received. Best thanks for your kind attention. They will be well taken care of as a lasting reminder of how transient is everything in this *fickle time*, for if any one had prophesied to me, in 1785, that I should ever receive anything of the kind from you, I should have laid his prophetic spirit in some ugly fashion. May you be happy and fortunate ; this is my most fervent and ardent wish. Think sometimes of her who indeed has forever renounced all wishes for herself, but is nevertheless

Your friend,

ELISABETH.

82. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 18th July, 1788.

At last a letter, after the lapse of four long weeks, which seemed like an eternity. I was, then, not

quite forgotten ; the recollection of me was not yet utterly extinguished. I will, therefore, endeavor to make myself as easy as possible ; but promise it I cannot, that would moreover be a bad sign ; for a friendship which can so readily put itself at ease is as good as—past. Do not ever again keep me waiting so intolerably long for news from you, but bear in mind that it is the single thing left me, and that all my former *hopes, expectations, fancies*, and so on, must restrict themselves, alas, only to the very least and smallest things—to the dead letters of the alphabet—and such little crumbs you will surely not deny to a friend so impoverished in all other respects. In one of your letters you expressed a desire to get news of the stage here. From me they would be very incomplete, for I often get up and go away in the middle of the piece. I did so last week in the *Glückliche Jagd (Successful Hunt)*, for who could see Grosse play your part and not get a fever from vexation? Truly it was a scandal for the organ,\* who with Mesies sat entirely alone in the parterre, that the Frau Rath, instead of regarding the stage, looked through her glass at the few Jews in the third rank, and then in the middle of the piece, after a couple of “ahem, ahems,” got up and went away. . . . The honor the monarch has shown you rejoices me so much that I could spring as high as the ceiling. You know that I am no politician, and the Emperor and the Turks, the Turks and the Emperor interest me as much as the man in the moon, But now I read the newspaper—but

---

\* Nickname for the Director.

nothing except the article Berlin; and then I rejoice when the King is in good health, when the Princess Elisabeth is getting well at Pymont, when the Queen lays a corner-stone, and so on. Day after to-morrow I shall take the play-bills with me to Stock's; they will all rejoice there, man, wife, and children (for Ricke \* and Katy always ask after you), also Demoiselle Marianne—Herr Graf—in one word, the whole pie.† I have, also, so many greetings for you from all your friends, who are always teasing me for news of you, in particular Friend Thurneissen. When I then have no letter for four weeks, I stand there like a child who cannot get beyond D. For the future, conduct yourself in a more exemplary manner. . . . And do not forget

Your friend,

ELISABETH.

83. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

Sent off Friday, the 1st August.

DEAR FRIEND: Herewith I send you the fifth volume of Goethe's works. Herr Göschel has taken great pains with the handsome binding—only it is a pity that the first four volumes are not, also, as elegant. I hope you will have some little joy over the snuff-box made new again; it seemed to me, at least, very pretty; use it in cheerful and joyous mind and spirit, and think sometimes of its sender and originator. . . .

I wonder at nothing so much as at the contin-

---

\* Fredericke.

† "Mit einem Wort die ganze Pastete."

uance of my good health; it must be of iron and steel. Last Saturday I suspected, at the least, that a fever was on the approach; but, thanks to my good constitution, it transformed itself into something less dangerous. And the cause? you ask. Just think, my Hans Zenger, the character I am so in love with Herr Chike plays!!! So it fares with me every day! Ah! my poor hobby-horse! It was such a good, kindly, harmless little creature, and now, for want of nourishment, is becoming as lean as the Pope in the *Dance of Death* at Basle. Your letter of the 22d July has again strengthened my belief—animated anew my hope—so great is the distance—so little probability is there in the matter, that *I ever in my life see you again*, that the only thing I still hold to is that the remembrance of your friend will not be entirely extinguished; and, as one must from time to time freshen a picture with varnish, that the colors may not entirely fade away, thus must our correspondence be the varnish that our friendship may not fade away, or quite expire. I comprehend very well that you have much to do, and willingly forego long letters, but a couple of lines—just a little scrawl—that can, that will you surely not deny your friend. That *Die Geschwister* have so well pleased in Berlin rejoiced me very much. It is a little piece, but just for that reason demands, on the part of the players, more art to set each character in the proper light, and to represent it with warmth and truth, than in a great show-piece with drums and fifes. But people such as these who appear on the play-bill sent me elevate the piece and do honor to the author. During the remarkable

heat which we have also had here, I have wished our Main 100 times in your neighborhood. The bath-houses you know so well were never empty from five in the morning until nine in the evening; and in the Main it looked like the resurrection of the dead. But that will yield a wine!! If you come back in 1798—and death has the politeness to leave me here till then—you shall, in my house, drink my health in this Anno Domini, out of a beautiful, gilded glass—you shall also sit in your chair with the double cushion. *Summa summarum*, all shall go as formerly, and if, up to then, my voice does not fail, I will cry out as loud (as when you came from Cassel in 1785, the 6th September), “Are you there?” Last week I had my cellar put in order in the presence of the old gentlemen\* of 1706 to 1719. There came to mind all sorts of thoughts; you will easily be able to guess all I thought, for you know well enough my extravagant power of imagination. It is now high time that I leave off, for the enemies of my happiness and repose are approaching.† Farewell! Greet the Frau Gevatterin, and send again soon a scrawl to

Your friend,

ELISABETH.

84. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 12th September, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND: It is truly singular that I, who once was so fond of writing, who never missed a post-day, who would have sooner neglected anything

---

\* Wine-casks.† *i.e.*, those regretful recollections.

than that, have now not put pen to paper in four weeks. But, dear friend, what can a woman to whom everything in the world has become indifferent, who has no feeling for anything further, who in *all* her hopes has been most terribly disappointed, who has lost faith in mankind—what shall she write? Shall I annoy others with my grief? Of what use is it? Shall I forever build castles in the air? trust anew to the will-o'-the-wisp hope, in order anew to be deceived? No, my beloved friend! For me all is past; with me it is over; that it is well with you, that beside your other acknowledged merits you shine in comic operas, gives me joy, for I have not yet fallen so low that the good fortune of my friend should not gratify me. But it is a bitter-sweet joy. Others reap who have not sown, and she who sowed the seed suffers hunger; from the tree that I planted others now eat the ripe fruit. But, for heaven's sake! what need of this? Let it pass; so much has had an end; with thee,\* too, it will not last forever. . . .

Blanchard is in Berlin! three years ago he was here! "Muss ich denn alles mahnen?"† (must I then bring all to mind?) says Elisabeth in *Carlos*. That was the happiest time in my whole life; but it has flown away, the golden time. . . . Now farewell, dear friend. May your success in Berlin be very great, brilliant, and of firm duration. Delight me from time to time with good news, and believe that

---

\* *i. e.*, With herself.

† What Elisabeth says is, "O, muss mich's ewig mahnen?" (Oh, must I ever be reminded?) *Don Carlos*. Act I., scene VI.

neither distance nor time will blot out your memory with

Your friend,

ELISABETH.

85. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 13th (November, 1788) }  
5 o'clock in the evening. }

. . . Last night I dreamed of fat lambs and great vats of wine. The stout Iris, as a great dreamer, prophesies great luck; for the moment it is just the contrary. I got, last night, such a fearfully swollen face, and look as terrible as Azor—swallow medicine which tastes like the devil-and-his-grandmother. . . .

The 16. . . . That the Frau Gevatterin is in such favor with the queen, delights me. Her majesty is said to be a great friend of the German theatre. There was once here such a woman, who, truly, was no monarch, but yet in other respects was a good sort of woman, and she was delighted when the Frau Gevatterin sat at her little, tiny little table, and Trinne\* had made the rice puffs or the jelly tarts good and palatable. . . . One pen is completely blunted with writing. For this long letter you have to thank my monkey face; † writing does me good to-day. . . . This is indeed a letter in the old style, ‡ as if it were going to Cassel. All

---

\* Katharina.

† Her swollen face.

‡ We give only portions of the letter, the parts omitted being chiefly the theatrical gossip of the day, which has no longer any interest.

greet you and the Frau Gevatterin. I also, and with the assurance that I am in truth

Your friend

ELISABETH.

86. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 19th December, 1788.

DEAR FRIEND : Your dear letter rejoiced me very much, for more reasons than one ; for already rose up in me the thought, as if out of a black thunder-cloud, thou and thy name are clean forgotten. The more agreeably was I surprised. When one considers anything as lost, and it is unexpectedly found, the soul feels a kind of comfort, which does it unspeakable good. Only, the end of your letter really frightened me. You will not, after all, actually carry out that singular idea, and take a journey of sixty miles in this terrible season of the year. It would have no good consequences for you or for me. No soul either in Berlin or here would believe that you had undertaken the journey solely on my account ; but all the world must think that it did not please you any longer there, and that you wanted to offer yourself again here, and when you went away it would be said, accordingly, that the Direction would not have you ; and then stories without end would be fabricated. Even in Berlin they might think the same. Such disadvantages would such a step have on your side. And now not even to mention all that would be reported in regard to me. Do you think, then, that such another leave-taking would be a balm to me ? No, dear friend, such a scene I would not have again ! If fate wills it that I should see you



again, it must occur in the old way ; otherwise I humbly decline it. In the anxiety of my heart I send this letter by the flying post, and earnestly beg you to set me at ease by just the two words " I stay where I am)." Everything concerning theatrical matters I send you next week. That the Frau Gevatterin has carried off the victory over Frau Willmann was not unexpected to me : the public here thought so, and the players too. . . . Ay, ay, to what great honor has my mantle attained ! to adorn the very shoulders and loins of an emperor. What may not become of things when they get into the right hands : with me it would have remained in obscurity, while, on the other hand, its present possessor has brought it to fame and honor. . . . If your little son in Mainz gets through his illness it will be a wonder ; he has the small-pox so prodigiously that the whole child is one pock ; but he has, by my order, a doctor, and all possible care ; you can, therefore, be easy about him. My health has begun to go up-hill again ; only on account of the Siberian cold my physician has forbidden me to go out. Farewell, and answer me speedily—that you accept good advice, and will remain where you are. Once more, thanks for your good letter.

From your friend

ELISABETH.

Give little Carl a smack from me, and teach him my name, so that when he comes back here it may not be strange to him.

87. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 2d January, 1789.

DEAR SON : I am very glad that the little Christmas present gave you pleasure. Have the kindness to give best thanks in my name to Herren Wieland, Bertuch, and Krause for the *Mercury* and the *Journal of Fashion* ; only, I must remind them that the *Mercury* for December, 1788, has not yet been sent me. Do me the favor to see that I get it, otherwise last year's series will be incomplete. We live here in expectation of what is to come : the Main has not yet broken up, and all are apprehensive of a flood. We still remember 1782, but we must patiently abide the result ; 15 weeks already has the old gentleman been shut up. Every one awaits anxiously the firing of the cannons, for that is the signal that it is breaking up. If it happens in the daytime, all who have sound legs run to see, and it is truly a terrible sight. I wish you could see it with us. For the rest, everything goes on here its usual way—Mondays a ball ; Fridays a concert ; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the play ; not, however, by our former company, but Koberwein, from Strassburg, plays until the beginning of Lent. The company is very ordinary, but the ballet is really pretty. My greatest hobby now is playing upon the harpsichord ; it makes me very happy. Farewell, and think sometimes of

Your true friend,

E. G.

88. *Frau Rath to her Grandchildren.*

The 23d February, 1789.

DEAR, DEAR, GOOD, EXCELLENT GRANDCHILDREN : Oh what joy you have caused me ! and it

all came so very unexpectedly! Dear Louisa, it was as if you had known that I was in great need of a knitting-bag—my very best one is 9 years old, and as inelegant as possible; and as I very often have occasion to go into company where work is done, it was highly necessary to procure a new one; and here comes one, so entirely by chance—a fine, handsome one, made by my dear grandchild—no other one could have been so precious to me. But this one I shall indeed hold in honor: tell all my acquaintances from whom it comes, and be proud of my clever and industrious grandchild. Receive, then, my best thanks for it. My dear Julia, I thank thee, too, for thy prettily-worked present; it shall also be paraded in thy remembrance, that every one may see that thou, too, dear Juliette, thinkest of thy grandmother. And my dear Jettchen,\* with her pretty little basket, as neat as could possibly be made—potz fickerment! Grandmother must now be industrious, and, N.B., make also pretty work, such as will suit so elegant a basket. I will, at least, do my very utmost not to put it to shame. I thank thee herewith heartily for thy love for grandmother.

Faithful, staunch knight Edward! Thou, too, thinkest of me. Ah, out of this glass it tastes good; I drank at once my dear knight's health, and shall often do so: thanks, thanks, thanks, dear Edward. The stout Catharine asks every day if Edward and Jettgen are coming very soon. She would be too glad to look on with them at guard-mounting; and

---

\* Henrietta.

Elisabeth \* would like once more to make baked puddings. Come again very soon ; dost thou hear ?

Now, dear grandchildren, once more my thanks ; continue further to give joy to your dear parents and to me, and believe that I ever, from my whole heart, am

Your tenderly loving grandmother,

ELISABETH GOETHE.

89. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

Sent off the 9th March, 1789.

DEAR FRIEND : When you have written, sealed, and sent off your letters, it is just as if you had drunk out of the river Lethe : all is so cleanly wiped out of your memory that not a trace of it remains behind ; for how were it possible otherwise, that you should be hurt at the expression *master-stroke*, † which says and expresses nothing different from what you yourself have said, and expressed in all your letters. Am I, perchance, to condole with you because you and the Frau Gevatterin have the greatest success ? because the latter is the favorite of one of the greatest Queens ? because she ousts *everybody* ? because the King himself has said that she sings better than

---

\* Elizabeth Hoch, who lived with the Frau Rath many years, and was with her at her death. Of Goethe she always spoke as " unser junger Herr " (our young master). She was assigned a place of honor at the unveiling of the statue of Goethe at Frankfort in 1844. She died in 1846, in her 87th year.

† In a previous letter, which is not given because it was not important, the Frau Rath had said, " the going away from here was a master-stroke."

W., and the latter had to withdraw in disgrace, and abandon the scene of action? because, when the play was in Potsdam, the King presented 900 thalers to the cash-box (N.B., "for me and the Gevatterin" you write) because you have had a benefit-concert where (according to the newspaper reports) the King gave 40 Friedrichs d'or, the Queen 10, and, besides that, the house was crammed full? because you, worthy friend, in Fiasco and other parts, have been applauded by the King? and more of the like. All this surely deserves no jeremiads! The Frau Gevatterin wrote, too (not to me, for what should induce her to do that?) but to St., that she was treated with the greatest affection, and that this was her amends for the *sufferings of the last 3 years passed here*, and so on. Oh, how happy (thought I, amid all these splendid tidings) must these good people now be: with shuddering must they reflect upon their residence here, where envy, intrigue, neglect embittered their days. Since these above-narrated events are not tittle-tattle from others, but actual facts from their own letters, it is impossible for me to retract my opinion; but I maintain against every one, who ever he may be, that the leaving here and going to Berlin was—a master-stroke. That you vexed yourself over my poor letters I do not at all comprehend; but may I yet venture, without giving offence, to ask after my own things? especially as they are of no use to you: of what service to you is one part of the *German Mercury*? and it makes my whole collection incomplete. And what has the saddler at Mainz to do with my furniture—what is it to him? Have the kindness (but don't get vexed) to send me the *Mercury*, and

give me instructions for Mainz, while the company is still there. Those must truly be strange things which should give you the right not to hold to your contract; as I cannot penetrate into this secret, it is out of my power to judge of it, only I beg and beseech you, out of old friendship, take no rash step, for repentance after an act avails nothing, and is the most painful of all feelings. You would come here? Why? for what purpose? Is, then, your engagement in Mainz so certain already that you need only to come? and if it were so, has the company, then, so changed within the year? As far as I know, all the hateful people who drove you away from here are still there, and remains there beside. What in all the world is the matter with you all at once?—out of paradise back into purgatory: let anybody versify me that! Well, well, it was a sudden freak of ill-humor, which will, no doubt, subside. Is it not so, I have divined it? There will again come model letters, corresponding to the previous ones, over which your friends can rejoice. Göschen is a l . . . d.\* Here he sends the 8th volume again, bound in paper like the first 4 parts: what folly has seized him to have the 5th part so splendidly bound? But he shall catch it: I have sent an epistle to the proper place, and have made a strong complaint of this unexemplary behavior. I hope that this part will procure you some happy hours. How has the *Devil's Opera*, my favorite piece, been received? It would have been truly a great misfortune if you had cut out Herr C.'s eye. He is said to be a very handsome man, and

---

\* Lumpenhund (ragamuffin).

to have a lady passionately in love with him; she would have paid you for it finely. . . .

Your friend

ELISABETH.

90. *Frau Rath to Louisa Schlosser.*

The 14th October, 1789.

DEAR LOUISA: I am very glad that the book sent gave thee joy, and I wish nothing so much as always to be able to provide some little pleasure for thee and thy dear sisters. The Fraüleins von Clermont are very nice children; but I saw them for too short a time, and had too little intercourse with them to decide which one pleased me best. They remembered their stay with you all with much pleasure, and told me much that was dear and good of you all, which was very gratifying to me. My best and heartiest greeting to Aunt Bogner; and the book asked for, I will see if it can be had, and send it. I am very much pleased that thou esteemest so highly my well-meant but badly-scrawled letter, and that thou keepest it so carefully. For writing is not precisely my forte, and my letters, if I do not give very special attention to them, have very often neither form nor skill; so much the more it flatters me that thou esteemest them so much as to keep them. Yes, if I wrote as well as my Louisa—Potz Fischen! then all Christendom should have letters from me. Well, well, each one has his own peculiar gift; and if I were with you all in the long winter evenings I would surely let my light shine, and make your time so pass away with pleasant stories and pretty legends that there should be nothing like it.

Now I have still to write to dear Julia, so farewell  
for this time, and hold dear

Thy faithful grandmother,

ELISABETH GOETHE.

91. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 1st March, 1790.

DEAR SON: The first thing I beg of you is to thank my son for his 6th volume. Tasso and Lilla are new to me, and I hope to have much pleasure from them. Inform him, further, that his *Roman Carnival* has been represented with all splendor at a Court-ball in Mainz; this intelligence Mamma La Roche sends him with her hearty compliments. The Emperor's \* death has made our city a living grave: the ringing of all the bells, which takes place twice a day for four weeks—namely, in the morning from 11 to 12, and the evening from 5 to 6 o'clock—has such a lugubrious tone that one has to cry whether one would or not. The whole magistracy is in deep mourning; the garrison black, everything wound with crape; the imperial recruiting officers, the councillors, ambassadors, and so on, all, all black; it has an exceedingly mournful appearance. Next Sunday, the 7th March, there is to be a funeral sermon in all the churches of the three religions; the cathedral is to be entirely hung in black; young and old to appear in deep mourning; singers are engaged for the funeral mass, and this single item costs 2000 florins. Should the future coronation draw

---

\* Joseph II.



near, you know where your place is. I have, also, for that time a plan in my head which it is too early yet and inopportune to communicate. If I live to see it—well, with time comes counsel. Give my respects to your mother, and believe that I am evermore

Your true friend,

E. G.

92. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 22d April, 1790.

DEAR SON : I have a request : one of my friends would be glad to know if his Serene Highness the Duke is in Weimar, or where he may be ; two lines of reply is all that is necessary. But I should be quite as glad to know where my son is. Some say in Venice, others in Switzerland. Now a few words of myself and my country. The mourning for the Emperor is over : all are in expectation of what is to come. If there should be war, as is reported, then God knows when the coronation will be ! Meanwhile the quarters are already being arranged, and the Ascent\* is in July. I will await it all with patience, and a little room shall be kept for you ; for the show you must surely see with us. Commend me to your mother, and believe that I am, unchangeably,

Your faithful mother,

E. G.

---

\* The ascent was a formal procession of the Ambassadors and Imperial Commissioners, in great pomp, to the Römer or Imperial Hall in Frankfort, to arrange the preliminaries for the election of an Emperor.

93. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

ESTEEMED HERR GEVATTER : As I know by experience that it is your method, way, and manner to offer the skin for sale before you have the bear, I therefore consider myself bound out of friendship to place our situation here so clearly and plainly before your eyes that you may be in a position to reflect maturely upon the matter, in order not to bring yourself anew to detriment, vexation, and disgust. Koch remains from to-day's date, 11th, say eleven years longer. He does not play young parts any more, but has relinquished them to Porsch and Ziegler. In fathers, pedants, heroes, who do not precisely require to be young, he pleases, and is in favor (which is the best) with Herr von Dahlberg ; will, therefore, hardly leave. A national theatre here is not to be thought of ; as long as the authorities forbid the play during Advent and Lent, any such thing is a vain wish which cannot be fulfilled. The greatest obstacle (setting aside those above-mentioned) to ever seeing you here again is, truly, that Dahlberg is still very angry with you ; and I know from a *sure source* that whether you come back sooner or later, punishment awaits you. How is it, then, credible that he will invite you back here ? Do not, therefore, sit down again between two stools ; and begin, for once, to reflect before you act. But by all means tell me how it comes to pass that you want to be off again. Your first letter, as well as those from the Frau Gevatterin, were all so full of *rapture, jubilation, shouts of joy, royal favor, and so on.* We poor wretches, with all our proven friendship, services rendered, and good

will, fell into the background as utterly unimportant figures, so that the strongest eye could not perceive us! You might, at least, out of delicacy, not have painted up your paradise so exquisitely, and have then rather kept silent about the amends for the 3 years of misery (as the Frau Gevatterin expressed herself in a letter). Be assured that this trumpet-tone hurt your friends very much; but all this aside. God grant you many more happy days, although they may not be passed with us; yet the world is large, and God's heaven over all, and your mutual talents find everywhere success. Greet your dear wife, the little singer Carl, the little girl, from

Your Gevatterin, who means it sincerely,

ELISABETH.

The 11th May, 1790.

P.S. The poor organ gave the enterprise up to D. at precisely the wrong time. The coronation would have extricated him from all difficulties. In July is the first Ascent for the election;\* that is a great spectacle. My house will be crammed full from top to bottom.

94. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 12th June, 1790.

DEAR SON: It is nearly impossible to determine how much a residence here during the coronation would cost; so much is certain, that a single room will cost a carolin a day, and board for a day certainly not under a crown-piece. Besides, it is also a

---

\* "Auffahrt zur Wahl." See preceding note.

question whether a cavalier, who is not in the train of an Electoral Ambassador, could get a room, for our best inns are being let entire. Dick in the Red House has already been offered 30,000 florins, but he will not yet give it for that. If Leopold should be Emperor, God knows where all the people will find room ; for, in that case, ambassadors come who strictly do not belong to the coronation, such as the Spanish, Neapolitan, one from Sicily, and so on. The Papal Ambassador has hired a country house for 3000 carolin, because he could find no place in the town. The persons who choose the quarters have not yet been to my house, consequently I do not venture outside the door, and in this splendid, heavenly weather, sit, as it were, in the Bastille. If they should find me absent they might take the whole house, for these gentlemen are deuced quick at taking, and when they have once marked the rooms I would not advise any one to dispose of them in any other manner. Now I must tell you something more that is amusing. Last winter there was no ice here, and the polite world had to go without this luxury ; one man only, named T—, has a pit full still from the year '88. This pit is about as large as my sitting-room, but only 3 feet high. The Elector of Cologne has offered this man 19,000 florins, but he will not sell for less than 30,000 florins. Oh, if I only had ice now instead of wine ! If the coronation is not delayed until winter : I am anxious and uneasy about it ; but we must wait with patience. You will certainly come with my son ? You shall have a room ; but it is true you must content yourself should it be three flights up. What would that mat-

ter? we will be merry for all that. In this agreeable expectation, I remain as always,

Your faithful friend,

E. G.

---

The Frau Rath, as the daughter of a chief magistrate of Frankfort, and having always relatives in the magistracy, had her privileged place for witnessing the various election and coronation ceremonies. A little window in the Römer, near the clock, is still pointed out as the spot whence she looked out on the pomp and parade of the five coronations which occurred during her lifetime.

On this occasion there were assigned to her as guests two Mecklenburg princesses, nieces of Queen Charlotte of England. One of them was the afterward so celebrated Queen Louisa of Prussia. The other took for her third husband a son of George III., the Duke of Cumberland, who, later, became King of Hanover.

These princesses were then young girls, and the Frau Rath was only too happy to see youthful faces about her. Delighted to be freed from the restraints of court-etiquette, they looked eagerly about them for amusement, and, spying the pump in the courtyard, begged to be allowed the fun of pumping water. The permission was readily granted, and the future queens were joyously at work when the circumstance came to the knowledge of their governess. Horror and consternation were the natural feelings of a right-minded governess in such an emergency, and she hastened to put a stop to such unprincess-like behavior. But here the Frau Rath was in her

element : she had stood for years between her own children and their stern, exacting father ; to fly into the breach between youth and authority had been for years her daily life ; she confronted the governess with all the arguments she could think of—she begged, she coaxed, she wheedled—but finding everything ineffectual, she quietly pushed the governess into her room and locked her in. “ For,” she said, “ I would have brought down on my head the greatest annoyance sooner than that they should have been disturbed in their innocent diversion, which was permitted them nowhere except in my house.”

95. *Frau Rath to Friedrich von Stein.*

FR., the 20th December, 1790.

DEAR SON : After the great confusion which we had here, it is now as still as death. It is very agreeable to me, for now I can let my hobby-horses gallop so much the more quietly. I have four of them, of which one is as dear to me as the other, and I often do not know which shall come first in order. Sometimes it is making Brabant lace, which I have learned in my old age, and take a childish pleasure in it ; then comes the harpsichord, then reading, and lastly, chess, long given up, and now brought out again. The Countess of Isenburg, who lodges in my house, takes also great pleasure in the above-named game ; evenings when we are both at home, which, thank God, is often the case, we play, and forget the whole world, and amuse ourselves royally. Since it is now customary that at the end of the year a number of the *Mercury* shall always be missing,

there is lacking for this time No. 2. Pray, ask dear Gevatter Wieland to have it sent to me ; thank him, too, for all the friendship shown me anew during this year ; and you, dear son, receive my hearty thanks for all your love, and believe that I am ever and always, in truth,

Your true friend and mother,

E. G.

---

The above is the last letter to Friedrich von Stein in the collection edited by Drs. Ebers and Kahlert.

In the spring of 1791 von Stein went to the University at Jena, and, possibly, his correspondence with the Frau Rath ceased at this time. At Jena von Stein lived with the Schillers. Charlotte von Lengfeld (Schiller's wife) had been one of the friends and correspondents of his youth, the two families of von Stein and von Lengfeld, having been very intimate ; so that when von Stein went to Jena the Schillers received him into their own house. Later he made a journey to Hamburg and England, and on his return went to Silesia. At this time we find an interesting notice of him in the Schiller-Körner Correspondence. On the 3d of July, 1795, Schiller writes to Körner : " The young Herr von Stein will shortly visit thee in Dresden. The Duke sends him for several years to Breslau, to study the administration of finances, and fit himself for president of the exchequer at Weimar. He is an assistant at the Board of Finances in Weimar. You all will find in him a young man of attainments and a very excellent fellow."

On the 6th of November Körner replies : " Stein

has been here, and made a very agreeable impression upon us. There is nothing in his entire nature to inspire one with enthusiasm for him, except a certain symmetrical harmony which is as agreeable to the feelings as beautiful architectural proportions to the eye. He is natural, easy, cheerful, sensible, without betraying any marked ability; is open to impressions, but without a trace of enthusiasm, and yet has a certain warmth of feeling, of the degree of which one cannot judge on a short acquaintance. Thou hast known him longer, and must be aware whether anything remarkable in any particular line is to be expected of him. Or was this, perhaps, not the aim in his education?

“Was he only to be educated to be a *man*? Were his impulses, generally speaking, never impetuous? Or have they had the skill to modify them by some counter action? Whatever thou canst write me about the education of this man is interesting to me. I have attentively observed him as a pedagogical work of art.”

Schiller then writes that Körner's remarks have interested Goethe. “It was, in fact, Goethe who directed his entire education, and took for his aim to make him thoroughly objective.\* Stein has always had a very salutary influence on me, and he has, at times, actually put me out of conceit with what is called being genial,† because without a trace of this quality he is so good and estimable. It is true such

\* Or, “to make the objective prevail in his character” (Simpson's translation of the Schiller and Körner Correspondence).

† “Genialität.”



men would only be able to maintain the world as it is, but not to advance it any farther."

Von Stein eventually, with the acquiescence of the Duke Carl August, accepted a permanent appointment from the Prussian Government, and remained in Breslau, where he married, and occupied a prominent position. In the correspondence of Goethe with Frau von Stein, his mother, he is often alluded to, and seems not infrequently to have visited Weimar. He died at Breslau in 1844.

96. *Frau Rath to Louisa Schlosser.*

DEAR, GOOD, EXCELLENT LOUISA: A thousand thanks for thy pretty, tasteful, and, withal, superb work-table. There is none such in Frankfort. It is, for this reason, being carried about to be shown from house to house: to-day it is at Frau Stock's, and I rejoice in anticipation of how, this afternoon, my clever Louisa will be praised and lauded in my presence by old and young. As soon as it was unpacked I carried it to my Countess, who lodges in the house. I had to leave it up there the whole day, so that she might show it to the persons of rank who came to visit her. They all fell in love with it, and each one would be glad to have such a handsome piece of furniture in her best room. I was envied by all on account of my clever grandchild, which made me very happy. Accept, then, once more, my thanks for it. Next week a box full of cakes and other bonbons shall rejoice your hearts. Tell thy father he shall have the account also, next week. Greet heartily thy dear mother, as well as thy brother and sisters,

the dear Bogner, and Charlotte. Farewell! Hold her dear, and in good remembrance, who is and remains

Thy faithful grandmother,

ELISABETH GOETHE.

The 1st May, 1791.

97. *Frau Rath to Louisa Schlosser.*

The 8th January, 1792.

DEAR LOUISA : It rejoices me very much indeed that I have contributed in anything to thy happiness. My wish is always to give pleasure to all of you dear ones, and when this end is attained I feel very happy. For this same reason I am always sorry when I cannot gratify thy desire, my dear Louisa. I have given myself all conceivable pains, have asked all judges and lovers of music, but no one can give me any information of the Ariadne in the form thou desirest it. Should I yet be so fortunate as to find the work, thou shalt certainly have it at once. I am glad that thou and dear Clärchen love each other so well. Guard this friendship in your hearts, for it is a precious thing thus to wander through our earthly life with a tried friend. In my youth it was to me also a great joy, at New Year's, to hear singing, drumming, and fifeing; but now my bed is dearer to me. At half-past nine, this time, I was already so sound asleep that neither the watchman with his friendly voice, nor fifeing and drumming disturbed me amid my 7 pillows. Although I was not present in body with you all, yet I wished you all the continuance of your well-being, together with prosper-

ity, happiness, and blessing; and may this be repeated once more herewith. Farewell! Hold dear  
Thy loving grandmother,

ELISABETH GOETHE.

---

Letter 98 is Goethe's reply to the inquiry from his mother whether he would accept a seat in the Frankfort Town Council, which had been left vacant by the death of his Uncle Textor. His mother's letter reached him at Treves, as he was with difficulty wending his way back from the Duke of Brunswick's disastrous campaign in France, whither Goethe had accompanied the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, who commanded a Prussian regiment. The letter acquires a further interest when placed side by side with the following passage from Goethe's "*Campaign in France,*" where he so glowingly depicts the varied emotions called up by the honor proffered him :

TREVES, the 28th October (1792).

Now when we found ourselves again on German ground, and might hope to extricate ourselves from the great confusion, information reached us of Custine's audacious and successful exploits. The great magazine at Spires had fallen into his hands, and thereupon he had found means to bring about the surrender of Mainz. These steps seemed to bring with them innumerable ills; they indicated an extraordinary mind, as sagacious as it was daring, and, in that case, all was lost. Nothing seemed more probable and natural than that Coblenz should al-

ready have been occupied by the French ; and how were we to make our retreat ? Frankfort likewise we gave up in thought ; \* Hanau and Aschaffenburg on the one hand, Cassel on the other, we saw threatened, and, altogether, what might not be apprehended ; the neighboring princes were paralyzed by the system of neutrality, and this made the masses, who were already seized with the revolutionary ideas, so much the more animated and active. Would not the whole district and the neighboring provinces be prepared for these ideas, just as Mainz had been worked upon, and prompt advantage taken of those ideas which had been already developed ? All this was necessarily thought of and discussed.

I heard it often repeated : Would the French, without great deliberation and precaution, without a strong force, have taken such important steps ? Custine's actions seemed as bold as they were cautious : one fancied him, his associates, his superiors, as prudent, energetic, sagacious men. The emergency was a great and perplexing one ; without question, the greatest of all the sufferings and anxieties yet experienced.

Amid this misery and confusion there reached me a retarded letter from my mother, which in a strange manner recalled the circumstances of my peaceful youth, and my relations to my home and to my native city. My uncle, Alderman Textor, had died, whose near relationship had during his lifetime excluded † me from the honorable and influen-

---

\* Frankfort had been already occupied by Custine.

† But one member of a family was eligible to the Council.

tial position of a Frankfort Councillor ; and now, in accordance with the established and laudable custom, they thought immediately of me, I being pretty far advanced among the Frankfort graduates.

My mother had been commissioned to ask of me whether I would accept the office of Councillor if, having been chosen among those to be balloted for, the golden ball should fall to me? Such an inquiry could have hardly arrived at a more singular time than the present. I was taken by surprise, and thrown back upon myself ; a thousand images rose before me, and would not allow me to collect my thoughts ; but as a sick man or a prisoner forgets himself for a while over some story that is related to him, so was I transferred to other spheres and other times.

I found myself in my grandfather's garden, where the espaliers, richly laden with peaches, were wont to tempt the grandson's longing appetite ; and only the threat of banishment from this paradise, only the hope of receiving the ripest, reddest-cheeked fruit from the benevolent grandfather's own hand, could in some degree restrain the longing until the proper time. Then I saw the venerable old man busied with his roses, and how he carefully protected his hands against the thorns with the antique gloves, brought as tribute from cities freed from taxation ; like the noble Laertes, and yet not like him, filled with sorrow and longing. Then I saw him in his robes as Schultheiss,\* with the golden chain, sitting on the throne under the Emperor's portrait ;

---

\* Chief Magistrate.

again, alas ! a few years in half consciousness in the invalid's chair, and finally in the coffin.

The last time I had passed through Frankfort I had found my uncle in possession of the house, court, and garden ; as a worthy son he had, like his father, mounted to the loftier positions under the constitution of this free city. Here, in this familiar family-circle, in this unchanged, well-known place, these boyhood recollections were vividly called forth, and presented themselves with new force before me. With them were associated other youthful ideas which I must not conceal. What citizen of a free city will deny that he, sooner or later, has had in view the office of Councillor, Alderman, or Burgomaster, and to the best of his ability diligently and carefully striven to attain to them, or perhaps to less important positions ? For the pleasing thought of some day taking part in the government is early awakened in the breast of every republican, and more actively and proudly still in the soul of a boy.

But I could not long give myself up to these pleasing dreams of my childhood ; aroused but too soon, I viewed the ominous locality about me, the melancholy surroundings which hemmed me in, and, at the same time, the clouded, darkened outlook toward my native town. Mainz in the hands of the French ; Frankfort threatened, if not already taken, the way to it obstructed ; and within those walls, streets, squares, dwellings, the friends of my youth, my kindred, perhaps already overtaken by the same misfortunes from which I had seen Longwy and Verdun so cruelly suffer—who would have dared to rush headlong into the midst of such a state of things ?

But even in the happiest days of that venerable corporation it would have been impossible for me to accede to this proposal, the reasons for which were easily explained. For twelve years I had enjoyed a singular good fortune in the confidence and indulgence of the Duke of Weimar. This highly gifted and cultivated prince was content to accept my well-meant, often inadequate services, and gave me such opportunity to develop myself as would have been possible under no other circumstances in my native country. My gratitude was boundless, as well as my attachment to the august ladies, his consort and his mother, to his young family, and to a country to which I had been of some service. Then, had I not also to remember that circle of newly acquired, highly cultivated friends, as well as so many other domestic joys and blessings that had sprung from the permanent character of my position? These images and feelings, called up by this occurrence, cheered me, at once, at a most gloomy moment; for you are already half-saved if from the mournfullest situation in a strange land you are roused to cast a hopeful glance toward the safe home; thus may we enjoy here on earth what is promised us beyond the spheres.

In this mood I began the letter to my mother, and although these motives seemed at first to rest on personal feeling and comfort and my own individual advantage, yet I had others to add to them, relating to the welfare of my native city, such as might convince my well-wishers there. For how could I prove myself actively useful, in that very peculiar sphere, for which, perhaps, more than for any other, one needed to be carefully trained? I had for so many

years become accustomed to employments adapted to my capacity, and which were of a nature such as would hardly be required for the needs and purposes of a city government. Nay, I could further add that if only burghers could properly be received to the Council, I had now become such a stranger to that position that I might fully be considered as a foreigner. All this, with my thanks, I made known to my mother, who, indeed, hardly expected anything different. It must truly have been late enough ere this letter reached her.

98. *Goethe to his Mother.*

The hope, beloved mother, of soon seeing you again, and my valued Frankfort friends, has now vanished, as the state of affairs obliged me to return to Weimar from Düsseldorf by way of Paderborn and Cassel.

How much anxiety I have had, till now, on your account ! how much deplored the position in which my fellow-countrymen are placed ! But how much, also, have I admired their demeanor in the midst of circumstances so critical. Certainly nothing could have been more flattering to me than the inquiry whether I could decide to accept the position of Councillor, should the lot fall to me—an inquiry which reached me at a moment when in the eyes of all Europe, nay, of the whole world, it is an honor to have been born a citizen of Frankfort.

The friends of my youth, whom I had always so much cause to value, could give me no nobler proof



of their continued remembrance than their holding me worthy of taking a part in the administration of the commonwealth at this important epoch.

Your letter, which I received in the midst of the tumult of war, cheered the sad hours I had to pass through, and from the situation of affairs I could hope in a short time to see again my loved native town.

In that case it was my intention to express by word of mouth my thanks for the signal honor done me, and, at the same time, circumstantially and frankly to explain the position in which at present I am placed.

With the irresistible predilection which every right-thinking man feels for his native country, it would be a painful sacrifice for me to decline an office that every citizen accepts with joy, and that especially at the present time it would be his duty to accept, were I not, on the other hand, placed here in such happy relations, which I may well say are favorable beyond my deserts. His Highness the Duke has treated me for so many years with distinguished favor, and I am indebted to him for so much, that it would be the greatest ingratitude to leave my post at a moment when the state is most in need of faithful servants.

I therefore beg you to thank in the warmest manner the estimable men who manifest toward me such friendly sentiments. Assure them of my sincere acknowledgments, and endeavor to preserve for me their confidence for the future.

As soon as the state of affairs in any way permits, I shall do justice to the feelings of my heart, and

circumstantially and by word of mouth express what could only be imperfectly said in this letter. May all that gives present anxiety to my honored fellow-citizens continue to be far from them, and the desired peace appear again for us all. Farewell.

GOETHE.

WEIMAR, the 24th Dec., 1792.

99. *Frau Rath to her Grandchildren.*

The last day in the year, 1792.

DEAR GRANDCHILDREN : This letter is to you all. Time would fail me to answer singly each one of your dear letters, and you would have to wait long for my thanks for the joy you have caused me by your dear and affectionate letters. Dear children, the Christmas present cannot possibly have caused you more joy than your letters gave me. Say yourselves, what could be to me more comforting and refreshing than to have grandchildren who conduct themselves toward me so gratefully, who remember me with so much love, who in spite of the distance between us so warmly love and honor me. Dear grandchildren, give me as much joy in the coming year as in that which is approaching its end. Keep me in good remembrance. In this year too, as you grow in age, grow also more and more in everything which may rejoice your dear parents, me, and all good people. Thus God will bless you, and all who know you will love and cherish you, and especially she who constantly was, is, and remains,

Your heartily loving grandmother,

ELISABETH GOETHE.

100. *Frau Rath to Unzelmann.*

The 22d January, 1793.

ESTEEMED HERR GEVATTER: My friend and I thank you for the pretty New Year's remembrance; only we would have wished to learn somewhat more about your health and welfare. As we are convinced that you are now in the most fortunate period of your life, may this year increase further (if it be possible) your happiness: this is the most sincere wish of us both. You will know our situation from the newspapers.\* The Prussians and Hessians are in winter-quarters here. His Majesty of Prussia is in the best of health. I have the pleasure of seeing his Highness every day at the play, as my box is directly opposite him. . . . Our theatre has lived to see good times—the coronation; now the many princes, generals, officers, and, above all, the King of Prussia. . . . Farewell, and be happy. This will ever rejoice

Your Gevaterin,

E. G.

---

There are no further letters to Unzelmann of any interest in Dr. Dorow's "Reminiscenzen." The Unzelmanns continued their successful career in Berlin, and Madame Unzelmann shone in the brilliant circle which a few years later gathered about Rahel. In "Rahel Levin and her Society Toward

---

\* The advance of the Prussians had made it impossible for Custine to remain in an open town like Frankfort, and he had fallen back upon the fortified post of Mainz.

the End of the Year 1801, from the Papers of Count S—,"\* we find the following :

. . . "The door opened, and a rapidly moving, most engaging lady burst in, pushed on to Mlle. Levin with a merry laugh, and rather fell into than seated herself on the chair beside her. All greeted her with joy.

"'But how is this?' began Mlle. Levin; 'is not to-day "Maria Stuart"?' and I believe you are—'

"'Yes, believe as much as you like,' put in the charming, sprightly woman. 'Mortimer is ill, and so Iffland brings forward in all haste another piece, in which I have nothing to do; I avail myself of it, and come to you, and if you want me I am going to stay the whole evening.'

"'Capital!' cried out Mlle. Levin, 'and how you hit it! You find here at once two of your adorers, Schlegel and my brother.'

"'It is the Unzelmann!' had Brinckmann † already whispered to me. She had not been long returned from Weimar, where she had had great success, and had often talked with Goethe, by whom she was so fascinated that she now wanted to force his *Iphigenia* on to the stage, for her benefit-night, in spite of Iffland's secret dislike to it. Brinckmann was too impatient to give me further explanations, and sprang eagerly forward to present himself as the true adorer of the lady, when Schlegel unexpectedly stepped before him, and excused himself to her somewhat solemnly and with embarrassment, but yet with

\* Varnhagen von Ense, *Vermischte Schriften*, vol. viii.

† A Swedish diplomat and poet.

boldness : ‘ it was more properly his brother Wilhelm who could be called her adorer, and who had sung of her as the fairy-child.’ I grew very warm ; such German, blundering awkwardness had never before come under my notice. But the sprightly lady replied laughingly, ‘ I know all this very well, and distinguish very clearly between the dissimilar brothers. Yet if I demand of you, dear Schlegel, no more than of your brother, you can, in God’s name, undertake his part, for a short evening, without danger ! But, dear little one,’ \* she continued, ‘ where have you your wits to-day, that you consign me to such people ? For, just see, your brother, too, wishes already to excuse himself. No need, no need, dear Robert ; I know that you are in love with a certain Louise ; you will no doubt get there what you deserve ; only take care that when the fire suddenly goes out for want of fuel, you are not left standing helpless in the dark.’

“ Brinckmann thought now to have gained an opportunity for himself, and endeavored most eagerly to improve it. He addressed his conversation now to Mlle. Levin, now to Mme. Unzelmann, now to both at once. He spoke with remarkable readiness, wove together seriousness and sport, and jested good-humoredly ; only, in everything he said he appeared to me a little too loquacious. This he seemed himself to feel, and yet became ever the more talkative. Mlle. Levin appeared resigned to listen to him. I listened at the same time, while Mme. Unzelmann carried on a conversation half aloud with Schlegel. . . .

---

\* Liebe Kleine, *i.e.*, Rahel.

“ Here Schlegel interrupted us, complaining that Madame Unzelmann had no conception whatever of art. ‘ I have utterly failed with her,’ he said, ‘ in my remarks upon her most important characters : she did not understand me in the least, and gave me the most stupid replies. She is not capable of giving the slightest account of a single one of her characters.’ Schack, happening to draw near, had caught this last remark, and replied to it at once. ‘ You gentlemen critics demand too much ! Madame Unzelmann knows it all in *her* way ; she acts it and brings it bodily before your eyes, and you yourselves wonder at her in it ; why must she now give the same thing in *your* way also ? To demand of the fascinating woman that she should—pshaw ! reason as you do, is precisely the same as to ask of you that you should act as she does—ah, but that would be beautiful, and we should not cry pshaw ! ’

“ ‘ Good, good, dear Schack,’ cried a voice behind him : it was Mlle. Levin, who had risen up and been attracted by our animated private discussion. Schack, like one caught, was for a moment confused, but only for a moment, and then briskly asked, ‘ Have I reported it well, kluge Kleine (wise little one) ? Well, I had not far to carry it ; for, gentlemen, what I have just said I had heard an instant before from our wise little friend, and I wanted to see at once how serviceable it might be, and whether you could say anything in reply to it.’ ”

101. *August, Prince of Saxe-Gotha, to Frau Rath.*

MADAM : Your kind and very flattering lines I received a few hours since with the most grateful feel-

ings; and I esteem myself fortunate, through the taking of Mainz,\* to be brought into communication with the mother of such a friend. No news in the world could have so heartily rejoiced me as the manner itself in which I learned the present. May, also, the purport of these news bring us nearer a more peaceful goal! This is, at present, the warmest wish I can allow myself, since the war-troubles detain me so far from Frankfort, and, in the mean time, deprive me of all hope of having the honor to present in person my thanks, Madam, to you, whose merits are long since known to me. For this pleasure I shall very soon give, by letter, a double and triple embrace to your son, to whom for many years my whole heart has so tenderly and truly clung. I have the honor to be, with the most distinguished regard and respect, Madam, your most devoted

AUGUST, P. z. Sachsen-Gotha.

GOTHA, the 25th July, 1793.

102. *Frau Rath to Louisa Schlosser.*

The 24th March, 1794.

DEAR LOUISA: Thou seest now how God, even here, rewards good children. Is not thy marriage † almost a wonder-work? And that everything should so dispose itself that now thy dear parents and brother and sisters go with thee, ‡ that would not

---

\* Retaken by the Prussians from the French.

† Louisa Schlosser was betrothed in the spring of 1794 to G. H. L. Nicolovius, who resided in Holstein.

‡ In consequence of the war Schlosser moved with his family to Holstein.

have so easily happened had not war come into the country. Mark this for thy whole life : the God who can of stones raise up children unto Abraham can turn everything, which we with our dim eyes regard as misfortune, to our good. Now, dear Louisa, thou, the only one \* remaining to me from a precious and ever-loved daughter, God bless thee ! Be the faithful companion of thy future excellent husband ; make his life to him as joyous and happy as is in thy power. Be a good wife and a German housewife ; thus will nothing be able to disturb thy inward peace, the quiet of thy soul. Hold, also, thy grandmother dear in the greater distance. My blessing accompany thee wherever thou art, and I am always

Thy faithful grandmother,

GOETHE.

103. *Frau Rath to Louisa Schlosser.*

The 20th September, 1794.

DEAR LOUISA : This time a few lines to thee, dear little maiden. I cannot sufficiently tell thee how much thy industry, thy mindfulness of me has rejoiced me. My hearty thanks for the beautiful warm stockings ; they will certainly be of advantage to me ; such things help me more than the whole apothecary's shop, with all its jars and boxes ; they have also turned out so well, for I tried them on at once. I send thee, herewith, a little present in return. Be content with grandmother's good-will. I send also 2 lb. chocolate ; the other 20 lb. shall soon follow by

---

\* Julia had died in the preceding year.



the carrier. Greet thy dear father, and thank him for the receipts sent. Now all is as I wished it, in the finest order, only my house is untidy and in disorder,\* which is very disagreeable to one accustomed to the contrary. God grant peace soon, that one may enjoy again tranquillity in one's possessions. Amen.

To-day I have many and various things to do; therefore only so much for this time. Greet thy dear mother, Henrietta, Edward, and Aunt Bogner, from

Thy faithful grandmother,

GOETHE.

104. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 24th Sept., 1795.

DEAR SON : Herewith come the Jews' wares. I wish thee much pleasure in them. My congratulations, also, on account of the future citizen of the world; only it vexes me that I cannot announce my grandchild in the newspaper, and hold open festival. But as there is nothing perfect to be found under the moon, I console myself with this, that my Häschelhans † is contented and happier than in an unlucky marriage. Kiss for me the little Augustus, and tell him that the Christ-child shall bring him pretty things from grandmother. . . .

---

\* All the movables had been packed up and sent off, in consequence of the general alarm about the war. The allied forces were constantly being driven back by the French, who, in fact, a month later occupied the whole left bank of the Rhine, with the exception of Luxembourg and Mainz.

† See Letter No. 20, note 2.

Here all is, anew, in great commotion. The Imperialists are retiring, the French will soon be with us again. True, those Prussians who are still here comfort us, and say the French will only pass through, and under their protection we have nothing to fear. But we must await results. I am cheerful and of good courage, and have not allowed a single gray hair to grow about the whole war. I see from my window the Austrians carrying away their sick in wagons, look on at the bustle, dine by the open window, look after my small housekeeping ; \* evenings at the play, let the tragedy pass before me, and sing, " Life let us cherish while yet the taper glows."

For the moment I do not do much work, and whoever now gets a letter from me may boast of it ; the weather is too fine, my outlook too excellent. Wert thou not Wolfgang, thou wouldest have had to wait. I wish thou wert here for an instant. I could hardly continue to write for the noise. The whole Rossmarkt is full of peasants' wagons, which have brought hay and straw to market ; the guard-parade of the Prussians is to march out, and on the great square there is no room ; the peasants get a cudgelling, and so on ; from the Bockenheimer gate wagons are coming in with beds ; the people of Mainz are in flight—enough : there is a hue and cry very strange to hear. An answer has just come from Herr Koppel that he is expecting Burgundy wine ; as

---

\* The Frau Rath, owing to her loneliness and the alarms of war, had sold, in May of this year, the large house in the Hirschgraben, where the poet was born, and now occupied hired apartments on the Rossmarkt. Here she passed the rest of her life.

soon as it comes he will send samples. Farewell ;  
greet all dear to thee.

From thy faithful mother, GOETHE.

P.S. With longing and anticipations of great  
pleasure I am awaiting the continuation of Wilhelm.

---

It will be seen that the Frau Rath called all her  
philosophy to her aid in regard to Goethe's relation  
to Christiane Vulpius, whom he afterward married.  
To her, who was so fond of her daughter's children,  
it must have indeed been a cross not to be able to  
hold open festival over those of her son.

105. *Frau Rath to Louisa Nicolovius.*

The 30th Jauuary, 1796.

DEAR, GOOD LOUISA, AND EXCELLENT HOUSE-  
WIFE : Here comes the great-grandmother's work.  
A thousand to one I am the first great-grandmother  
who has woven the lace for her great-grandchild's  
baby-clothes ; and in this case, as inspection shows,  
not mere lirim-larum, but a very handsome Brabant  
pattern. How beautiful the little creature will look  
in it ! Before thou gettest it I shall write again to  
thee and thy excellent husband, whom I am proud  
of as a grandson. For the present, farewell. For  
now the rarity must be packed and speedily sent off,  
that the great-grandchild may not arrive before the  
things. Greet thy dear husband.

From thy faithful grandmother

GOETHE.

To Frau Louise Nicolovius.

106. *Frau Rath to Louisa Nicolovius and Husband.*

The 1st February, 1796.

DEAR CHILDREN: Your letters, which were so grateful to my motherly heart, and gave me so much pleasure, I should have answered at once by return post, if the little being who is still invisible had not prevented me. Yes, dear children, my great-grandmotherly work was the cause of the delay. I was anxious and uneasy whenever it occurred to me that the great-grandchild might arrive before my rarity; everything had to stand still and wait, and so on. But now I draw breath! The little package has been sent off—whither? That you can read on the inclosed slip of paper. God grant our Louisa a happy and fortunate confinement; that shall and will be for us *all* a day of joy and rejoicing. Amen. My silhouette you shall have, but you must still have patience, for the man who is a master in that art is away; as soon as he returns it shall be made, and take among you the place you have so kindly and laudably designated for it. That my former friends and acquaintances still remember me with love is grateful to my heart, and takes me back again to the blissful days of former times, when I was so happy in the society of those noble and worthy men,\* when I saw and heard so much that was good, enjoyed so much food for heart and soul. Never, no, never, shall I forget that glorious time! Now that

---

\* These were the Stolbergs and Jacobis, near whom her grandchildren were residing in Holstein.

you, my dear children, have the good fortune to live among these excellent men, remember me sometimes ; it will be a joy and great delight to me in my loneliness, and in the great distance from you all, not to be entirely effaced from the memory of these never-to-be-forgotten friends. My dear son Schlosser, with wife and children, is coming to me in the spring ; the coming will be to me joyful and pleasant ; but the parting ! When I think that in all probability it will be the last time that Frau Aja will enjoy this pleasure, that the great distance makes correspondence and all else difficult, I have but one consolation, which I must, indeed, hold on to with both hands that it may not escape me—namely, that you all together \* will then make one of the happiest families, and that I must, in the peculiar disposition and guidance of *all* your fortunes, recognize, feel, and with heart-felt emotion acknowledge, and say, This is the finger of God. Now this same God, who thus far has shown us so much goodness, He will not let us lack for any good in this year ; also, may He bless you and keep you cheerful and joyous, grant our Louisa a happy sight of her first-born, and may she feel all a mother's joys. To the dear great-grandchild may He grant health, vigor, and strength for his entrance into life ; this will He do. Amen. Farewell, and hold dear

Your heartily affectionate grandmother,

GOETHE.

---

\* Schlosser, with his family, was going to join his daughter in Holstein.

107. *Frau Rath to Louisa Nicolovius and Husband.*

The 5th April, 1796.

Now all thank God, with heart, mouth, and hands, who doeth great things. Yes, indeed, to you, to me, to us all has He, anew, manifested himself as He who is good, and whose goodness endureth forever. Blessed be His Holy name. Amen. Dear children, God bless you in your new relation! The name of father and mother is honorable. Oh, what joys await you ; and fortunate little boy, to enjoy being brought up by such excellent parents and grandparents ! How carefully, my little darling, wilt thou be cherished in body and soul ; how early will good seed be sown in thy heart ; how soon everything be rooted out which might mar the beautiful image of God which thou bearest in thee ! Thou wilt increase in stature, wisdom, and favor with God and man. Thy great-grandmother can contribute nothing to all this good ; the distance is too great. Be glad, dear John George Edward, the great-grandmother cannot bring up children ; is not at all suited to it—does everything they wish when they laugh and are friendly, and whips them when they cry or make wry faces, without examining into the reason why they laugh, why they cry ; but I will love thee, heartily rejoice in thee, remember thee much and often before God, give thee my great-grandmotherly blessing—yes, this I can and will do. Now I have plainly told the young citizen of the world what he has to expect from me : next, a few words with you, my dear grown children. My best thanks for your so dear and precious letters ; they are always grateful to

my heart, and make me extremely happy, especially the news that the little package had come safely (for I had great anxiety about it) rejoiced me very much ; for only think ! if the great-grandmother's work, over which the good matron had so many a long day sat and woven, should have been lost or arrived too late, that would have been no joke to me ; but as it was just in good time, four days (for I looked at once in the almanac) before the little boy arrived, that was charming. The little fellow has so turned my head for clear joy that the proper congratulations, which, indeed, in the regular order ought to stand at the beginning, come now at the end ; but they mean just as much, and come just the same from the heart. God grant you to live to experience in your child joy and delight in large measure : May he be also your support in your old age ; may he be to you what you are to your parents and grandmother : this is the best wish—I do not know a better. Dear Frau Gevatterin (the title makes me great sport), when this comes to your hands you will be again brisk and active ; but, hear me, do not be too much so ; do not go out too soon into the April air, for it has its caprices, like old Gertrude in the *Wandsbecker Bote*.<sup>\*</sup> Stay quietly in your room until May comes, that no catarrh or cough may plague you. Now I hope you will accept good counsel. Well, dear Herr Gevatter, a thousand

---

<sup>\*</sup> The *Wandsbecker Messenger*, a half-humorous paper for the people, published by Mathias Claudius at Wandsbeck, near Hamburg. Claudius was very successful in songs for the people (Volkslieder) ; the one most widely known is the Rheinweinlied, beginning, "Bekränzt mit Laub den lieben vollen Becher."

thanks once more for all your love, for your nice letters (with Louisa's inclosed), for the good, heart-rejoicing news, for the relation of godmother, for all that is dear and good, with which you have so many times delighted my heart. God reward you for it. Hold me dear ; you live and flourish in the heart of her who is, and remains,

Your faithful grandmother and great-grandmother  
GOETHE.

P.S. My best thanks to the excellent Countess Stolberg, and no less to dear Aunt Jacobi, for their love and friendship toward my Louisa. God bless them for it. I sent the letter to Charlotte at once. Heavens ! how she will cry for joy ! She is a kind-hearted but singular creature ; she cries for joy, she cries for grief ; when it rains and when the sun shines ; ruins her eyes quite unnecessarily, and makes no lace for the great-grandchild.

---

The above is the last letter in the collection of the Frau Rath's letters to her grandchildren.

In 1797 her son-in-law Schlosser was offered by the magistracy of Frankfort the position of syndic. There was a provision in the Frankfort constitution which forbade that more than one member of a family should occupy a place in its councils. Schlosser had been, heretofore, ineligible in consequence of the presence of his elder brother in the magistracy ; but on the death of his brother he was invited to Frankfort in the most honorable manner, the usual balloting being omitted by an imperial dispensation,



granted at the unanimous request of the Frankfort Council. This honor he did not long live to enjoy.

On the 23d of October, 1799, Goethe writes to Schiller : " From Frankfort I receive the intelligence that Schlosser is dead. The French and his garden \* are the immediate causes of his death. He was in his garden as the former approached Frankfort ; he got belated, and found the nearest gate already closed ; was obliged to hasten on to the next one, which was far distant, came home to a very warm room, was from there sent for to the Council-house, and, in the sequel, fell into a fever, which proved fatal, and carried him off in a short time."

In consequence of Schlosser's death, his son-in-law, Nicolovius, found it necessary to visit Frankfort on family affairs. He came accordingly with his family, in the spring of 1800, at which time the Frau Rath had the pleasure of welcoming the great-grandson whose birth she had so warmly greeted. Nicolovius writes, on the 24th of May, 1800, " The grandmother, whose overflowing well of life is a true comfort to me, has given us a little family feast, and yesterday, what is unheard of with her, a more formal dinner, to which excellent Niersteiner † lent its fragrance. Her manner, her very decided character in society, her singularity, her effervescent flow of spirits, all carry one away, and allow neither leisure nor coolness for judging. . . . We cannot sufficiently praise her friendliness. Her age ‡ is perceptible neither in her mind nor body. May her favorite

---

\* A garden outside of the town, such as it was customary for well-to-do Frankforters to have. The Goethes had also one.

† A Rhine wine.

‡ In her seventieth year.

saying, 'Erfahrung macht Hoffnung,' \* be ours also. Where she appears, spring forth life and joy. She receives us indeed brilliantly, to the astonishment of all; † and yesterday, as our little Edward ‡ was with her in her box, and was swallowing the play with insatiable interest, she grew so great-grandmotherly proud that she trumpeted forth the great-grandson right and left, and I wager that there are now few persons of name in the city who have not heard Edward's praise from her lips, and know that the little fellow has from her a passion for the play in his blood." §

108. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 1st August, 1796.

Our present situation is in every respect very unpleasant and critical. Yet, to worry myself before the time, or perhaps lose heart, was never my way. To trust in God, to use the present moment, not to lose one's head, to guard one's worthy self from illness (for anything like that would now come at a very inopportune moment)—as this course has always heretofore turned out well for me, I intend to persist in it.

---

On the 12th and 13th July, 1796, the French bombarded Frankfort, which the Austrians were endeavoring to hold. "My good mother," Goethe writes

---

\* Experience worketh hope. Romans, 5 : 4.

† The Frau Rath, since the sale of her house, had lived very quietly.

‡ Then about four years old.

§ A. Nicolovius, Denkschrift auf G. H. L. Nicolovius.

in his diary, "in her handsome new apartments near the guard-house, has directly before her eyes, looking up the Zeil,\* the threatened and damaged portion of the city. She places her effects for safe-keeping in the fire-proof cellar, and flies over the bridge, which had been left open, to Offenbach. Her letter about it would be well worth adding here."

This letter has never been given to the public. Schiller saw it, and wrote: "Our best thanks for your mother's letter. Besides the historical value of its contents, we were interested in the naïveté of her own peculiar style."

109. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 4th Dec., 1797.

The first thing is to thank thee that thou hast given me a few weeks of this summer, during which I have so greatly rejoiced in thy society, and taken delight in thy remarkably good air and appearance. Further, that thou hast made me acquainted with thy loved ones, which also gave me great pleasure. God keep you all, as heretofore, and to Him shall be offered praise and thanks therefor. Amen. In one respect I am sorry that thou didst not visit me again on the return journey.

110. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 12th March, 1798.

A word only in regard to our conversation during thy stay here about the Latin letters.† The injury

---

\* The chief street of Frankfort.

† *i.e.*, about a proposition to substitute in printing the Latin characters for the German ones.

they will do mankind I will make palpably plain to thee. They are like a pleasure-garden belonging to the aristocracy, which no one may enter but the nobility and people with stars and orders; our German letters are like the Prater at Vienna, over which the Emperor Joseph had written, *For All*. Had thy writings been printed with these odious aristocrats, they would not, with all their excellence, have become so universal. Tailors, seamstresses, maid-servants, all read them; each finds something adapted to his feelings, and thus they walk in the Prater pell-mell with the *Literary Gazette*. Doctor Hufnagel and others enjoy themselves, bless the author, and hurrah for him! How wrong Hufeland has done to have his excellent book printed in letters of no service to the greater portion of mankind. Are only people of position to be enlightened? Shall the lowly be shut out from everything good? And this they will be, if a check be not put to these new-fashioned grimaces. From thee, my dear son, I hope I may never come to see any production so adverse to the interests of mankind.

---

At the present day the Germans are taught to read with facility either form of printing.

### III. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 20th July, 1799.

The news that you all are well rejoiced me heartily. According to what my daughter writes me, there was rather a strong excitement in your household on

account of the presence of his Royal Majesty.\* The Frankforters have also done everything possible to entertain their old acquaintance. He received and accepted it in a very friendly manner. An honor has befallen me which I did not expect—the Queen invited me, through her brother, to come to her. The Prince came to dine with me, and ate at my little table. At 6 o'clock he came to take me to the Taxis Palace in a carriage with 2 footmen behind. The Queen conversed with me of old times—still remembered her great enjoyment in my former house, the good pancakes, and so on.

*112. Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 1st Dec., 1799.

DEAR SON : Since the return of Mamma La Roche I really feel for the first time how thou, out of love to me, hast made shift with my little dwelling. Ah, what a splendid description she has given me and all thy friends of thy house and thy whole establishment!—the delicious dinner thou gavest her, the superb green satin room, the magnificent curtain, the picture that was behind it—*summa summarum*, she entertained me an entire day with it. What a day that was to me thou canst imagine ! God keep and bless thee, and let it be well with thee, and long mayest thou live on earth ; and thus it will be, for mothers' blessings build houses for the children.† Amen.

---

\* The King of Prussia.

† "Der Mutter Segen bauet den Kindern Häuser." "The mother's blessing establisheth the houses of the children." Ecclesiasticus 3 : 11.

113. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 31st January, 1801.

DEAR SON : Thank my dear daughter many times for her dear letter of the 22d January. Praise and thanks to God that He has so graciously and speedily turned aside from thee the great and threatening danger.\* Ah, what an admirable thing is ignorance ! Had I known of the ill which had overtaken thee before amendment had set in, I believe I should have died of distress.

114. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 1st October, 1802.

DEAR SON : My best thanks for the readiness to lend a helping hand to Herr Schöff (Alderman) Mel-lecher's hobby. I am always pleased when thou canst do a favor to a Frankforter, for thou art and livest still among us ; art burgher, sharest all with us, standest in Varrentrap's Calendar among the advocates—*summa summarum*, belongest still to us, and thy compatriots reckon it an honor to be able to count so great and distinguished a man among their fellow-citizens. Edward Schlosser has brought me thy kind greeting. I hope he will turn out well. Fritz Schlosser also ; only about Christian I am often anxious. This young man is so overstrained †—thinks he knows more than nearly all his contemporaries, has wonderful ideas, etc. Thou hast much

---

\* Goethe's severe illness at the end of the year 1800.

† " Ueberspannt," as a bow overbent.

influence with him ; if thou canst unbend him, do so.\* That you intend again to send me mental productions will be doing a good work ; there is great unproductiveness here, and your spring, which has abundance of water, will be grateful to my thirst. For thy coming, next year, I have plans in my head, each one more delightful than the other ; it will no doubt turn out well. God keep us all in good health, and the rest will follow. Farewell ! Greet my dear daughter and dear Augustus, from

Your old faithful mother and grandmother

GOETHE.

---

Many years after the death of Goethe's mother, Zelter having asked to see one of her letters, Goethe sent him the preceding letter (No. 114), and with it wrote, " Herewith I inclose one of my mother's letters, as thou desirest ; in it, as in every line she wrote, speaks out the character of a woman who led

---

\* " The three Schlossers and two Vosses," Goethe writes, " make one of the strangest groups of young people that has ever come to my knowledge. The youngest son of Alderman Schlosser (Christian) is a little *enragé* for the newest philosophy (the teachings of Kant), and with so much soul, heart, and mind that Schelling and I are amazed at it. His elder brother (Fritz) is of a quiet, sensible nature, and I perceive that the little one has invited him to Jena to learn the saving doctrine. My brother-in-law's son seems not to belie his father ; he appears to me to have a good, straightforward spirit, and pleasure in learning. He seems no little surprised that he must forswear all the philosophy that has been instilled into him, to which his little cousin will probably force him at last." (Goethe to Jacobi, 23d Nov., 1801.) It may be of interest psychologically to add that the little *enragé* later on went over to the Romish Church.

a strong, hearty life in the Old Testament fear of God, and full of trust in the unchangeable God of the people and the family ; and when she herself announced her own death, gave orders for her funeral with such accuracy that the kind of wine and the size of the cracknels for the refreshment of the attendants were precisely determined." (Goethe to Zelter, 9th Jan., 1824.)

115. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 13th January, 1804.

Frau von Stael is now, as I hear, in Weimar. She weighed upon me as if I had had a millstone hanging about my neck. I went out of her way everywhere, refused all companies where she was, and breathed more freely when she had gone. What does the woman want with me? I have never in my life written even an A B C book, and my good genius will in the future also guard me from it.

Greet thy dear ones.

116. *Frau Rath to Christiane Vulpius.*

FRANKF. A. M., the 24th January, 1804.

DEAR DAUGHTER: A thousand thanks for your dear letter. You have done wisely and well to inform me of my son's (praise and thanks to God) returning health, for there are all sorts of people who delight to spread ill news and to frighten one by exaggerating it ; therefore, once more, my best thanks. I am also made entirely easy by your kind assurance, yet beg you soon to inform me of the continuance of that health so precious to me ; for the heart of



man is, as was known of old, defiant and desponding. It has been reported here that Frau von Stael is very happy in Weimar, and that that princely residence will carry off the prize for renown over all other places where she has yet been, and will be by her immortalized. There will be soon fine proceedings in Weimar, when the hereditary prince makes his entry with his wife, etc.

117. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

FRCKF., the 9th March, 1804.

. . . But what in all the world are you doing with Frau von Stael! To her, Weimar is truly a paradise. She will some day praise and glorify you all. Whatever ladies here have the least of the learned tone—for example, Fräulein Louise von Barkhauss, Frau Geheimde Rätthin von Wiesenhütten, Frau von Schwarzkopf, and so on—relate wonderful things of how delighted the lady is there. Any such thing rejoices me heartily if I can keep out of it. Farewell. Greet my dear daughter and dear Augustus, from

Your loving grandmother

GOETHE.

Last Wednesday I had a very delightful evening at Schwarzkopf's. "Torquato Tasso" was read. *Antonio*, Frau Rätthin Goethe.

118. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 9th April, 1804.

Greet Schiller, and tell him that I from my heart esteem and love him; also, that his writings are and

will continue to be to me a true refreshment. Schiller and thou give me, also, unspeakable joy that you reply not one word to all the schnick-schnack of reviewers' twaddle and old women's gossip; so these gentlemen may go to the devil!\* That is splendid on your part. Had Herr von Mayer understood this, he would not have brought on himself so much vexation. Continue ever in this good course. Your works remain for eternity, and these pitiable scrawls go to pieces in one's hand, and are not worth pasting together. Enough said.

---

A few months before, Christiane Vulpius had written to Nicolaus Meyer: "You judge our dear Geheimrath † correctly when you are sure he will remain silent about Kotzebue's attacks. What time and strength he would have lost in the past thirty years had he noticed all the stupid things which have been printed about him. On the contrary, he is at work this winter on much that will certainly give pleasure to you and all his friends; he goes ever straight on his way, as you know, without looking much about him." (7th Feb., 1803.)

119. *Friedrich Maximilian Klinger to Frau Rath.*

S. PETERSBURG, 18 Sept., 1804.

Your remembrance, excellent lady, has caused me so much joy that I would gladly give myself up to the

---

\* "Darum mögten die Herren sich dem sei bei ergeben" (dem sei bei = dem Gott-sei-bei-uns—the God-be-with-us = the devil). See note to Letter 3.

† Goethe.

most youthful enthusiasm to describe it. But when I say to you that I think and feel just as at the time when I was so fortunate as to see, honor, and love you, that I am only outwardly changed, you will easily perceive what a happy day your letter must have given me. I thank you heartily for it, and venture to say that, to-day, after all the wordly experience and trial, I am as worthy of your friendship as when I first began life. I hope yet personally to convince you of it, and to find you as well and in happy mood as when I saw you in those charming times. I could not be of service to the Lieut.-Colonel, because he went to Moscow as a speculator, and entered upon affairs which lie outside of my sphere. Should I be able to serve him, do not doubt my good will. I thank you for sending the silhouette of my old crony. I hope he has ever remained my friend, as I have remained so to him. Should you see my old friend Riese, and Willemer, I beg you to greet them in the old spirit. From Riese I have never heard again, and I would have been so glad to hear from him. May you live as well, happily, and contentedly as you by your mind and heart deserve. I am, with the most cordial friendship and reverence,

Your

KLINGER.

120. *Goethe to his Mother.*

Receive, dear mother, a thousand thanks for all the kindness you have shown to our Augustus. I wish that the recollection of his presence may give you but a part even of the pleasure which his narration now procures us. We are, thereby, vividly

brought back to you and my old friends. Heartily thank all who so kindly received him. This first essay to look out into the world has succeeded so well with him that I have good hopes of his future. His youth has been a fortunate one, and I wish that he may gayly and joyously pass over into a more serious period of life. His description of your continuous good health gives us the greatest pleasure: he has often to repeat it. I myself, with more exercise in this better weather, am very well.

We all send our fairest, best, and most grateful greetings. G.

W., the 6th May, 1805.

121. *Duke George of Mecklenburg-Strelitz to Frau Rath.*

CHARLOTTENBURG, the 20th August, 1805.

As I know that you do your old friend justice, it would be impossible for me to depict to you in the usual flourishes my joy over your dear letter. I say to you, rather, that I have fully recognized in it my old dear Rätthin, the woman in regard to whom I have never wondered that she gave *Goethe* to us. This I have felt not merely in its general sense, but well-nigh, as I have expressed it, in these very words; and as in this way\* only can words find their way to your heart, as I know, therefore I write to you. For to people who hereafter shall wander *in mass* in Elysium without form or name, as your son says in his *Euphrosine*,† to such I certainly do not write, how-

---

\* *i.e.*, by writing.

† Allusion to Goethe's exquisite elegy, "Euphrosyne," written on hearing of the death of Christiane Neumann, an actress whom he

ever brilliant may be the positions they occupy here. Do you remain ever kindly disposed toward me, and a long time still here on the earth, that we may be able often again to clink glasses when I come through Frankfort, in remembrance of the good old times ; for I think I can state with tolerable certainty that I shall ever remain the same old fellow. The Queen,\* who assures me that she saw you again in Frankfort with heartfelt pleasure, sends her best greeting ; and I, if you permit me, embrace you, according to the old agreement, in the old German way. GEORG.

---

had himself instructed. She made her first appearance as Arthur in "King John."

"Denkst du der Stunde noch wohl, wie, auf dem Brettergerüste,  
Du mich der höheren Kunst ernstere Stufen geführt?  
Knabe schien ich, ein rührendes Kind, du nanntest mich Arthur,  
Und belebtest in mir britisches Dichter-Gebild."

The intelligence of her death reached Goethe in Switzerland, and he represents her in the elegy as appearing to him while toiling up a mountain pass, and begging him to give her name and form through the poetic art ; otherwise she must wander a nameless shade. This is the passage alluded to in the letter :

"Lass nicht ungerühmt mich zu den Schatten hinabgehn !  
Nur die Muse gewährt einiges Leben dem Tod.  
Denn gestaltlos schweben umher in Persephoneia's  
Reiche, massenweis', Schatten von Namen getrennt ;  
Wen der Dichter aber gerühmt, der wandelt gestaltet,  
Einzeln, gesellet dem Chor aller Heroen sich zu."

We venture a prose translation :

Dost thou remember the time when, on the stage, thou ledst me in the earnest paths of higher art? A boy I seemed, a heart-moving child, thou calledst me Arthur, and through me thou gavest life to the creation of the English poet.

Let me not go down unsung to the shades ; the Muse alone gives life to the dead. For there float about in crowds, in Persephone's kingdom, formless shadows, bereft of all name ; but whom the poet has sung wanders not formless ; distinguished, he joins the choir of heroes of all times.

\* Queen Louisa, of Prussia, his sister.

122. *Frau Rath to Goethe's Wife.*

The 16th May, 1807.

So the little Brentano \* has at last had her wish, and seen Goethe. I believe, in the opposite case, she would have gone mad. For I never saw the like. She wanted to disguise herself as a boy, and run on foot to Weimar. Last winter I was often really anxious about the maiden. Thank Heaven, she has at last had her wish in a proper manner. She is not yet back here, is in Cassel, so far as I know. As soon as she comes you shall learn all she has to say.

---

Goethe was married to Christiane Vulpius on the 19th of October, 1806. Two days before, he had written the following to the Oberconsistorial Rath Günther : †

During these days and nights an old purpose of mine has come to maturity. I wish fully, and in the legal form, to acknowledge as mine my little friend who has done so much for me, and has also passed with me through these hours of trial. ‡

Tell me, worthy pastor and father, what is to be done that we may be married as soon as possible, Sunday or earlier. What are the necessary steps to be taken? Could you not yourself perform the ceremony? I should wish that it might take place in the sacristy of the town-church.

---

\* Bettina, author of "Goethe's Correspondence with a Child."

† Keil, "Frau Rath," p. 364.

‡ The sacking of Weimar, which followed the battle of Jena.

If it is convenient, please give the bearer your reply.

GOETHE.

Goethe was at one time during the sack, according to the account Riemer\* gives of it, in personal danger, from which he was rescued by the coolness and presence of mind of Christiane. The thought of the position in which she and his son would have been left by his death may have assisted in bringing his old purpose to maturity.

123. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 19th May, 1807.

Herewith comes a note from the little Brentano. From it is to be seen that she is still roving about in strange lands. The terms of her letter show, too, more than could be done with a whole alphabet, how she was pleased with her visit to you. Her story by word of mouth I long for amazingly. If she was but the very shortest time with you, I know positively that there will be no other word to be heard from her but of Goethe. Everything that *he* has written, every line is to her a masterpiece, especially *Egmont*. In comparison, all tragedies that have ever been written are nothing, absolutely nothing. As she has, certainly, many peculiarities, she is, naturally, judged wholly erroneously. She has here, in the proper sense, no one but me. Every day that dawns she is here. This is almost her only pleasure. Then I must talk of my son, then tell stories. Then she maintains that no soul tells them as I do, and so

---

\* "Mittheilungen über Goethe."

on. Also from time to time she makes me little presents, sends a gift at Christmas. For the first Whitsuntide holiday she sent me by post two boxes with two superb flowers, on caps such as I wear, and a splendid porcelain chocolate cup, white and gold. Now a great spring from Bettina to the glass fruit-bottles, etc.

---

A few years before this (in 1804) Crabb Robinson saw Bettina in Frankfort, and made the following entry in his diary: "When I first came to Frankfort\* she was a short, stout, romping girl, the youngest and least agreeable of Madame de la Roche's grandchildren. She was always considered a wayward, unmanageable creature. I recollect seeing her climb apple-trees, and she was a great rattling talker. I recollect also hearing her speak in terms of extravagant admiration of the *Mignon* of Goethe's 'Wilhelm Meister.' Clasp- ing her hands over her bosom, she said, 'I always lie thus when in bed, in imitation of Mignon.' " (Henry Crabb Robinson, "Diary Reminiscences," etc.)

#### 124. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 8th Septbr, 1807.

Bettine Brentano is enchanted with the permission to send thee a little note now and then. Thou needst not answer it; that she does not ask, for that she is too insignificant. She will also trouble thee but very seldom. A man like thee has greater things to do than to write to her. She does not wish to

---

\* In 1800.



snatch for herself the moments which belong to posterity and to eternity.

125. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 6th Oct., 1807.

This fair was rich in professors ; and as a great portion of thy reputation is reflected back on me, and people fancy I have contributed something to thy great talents, they accordingly come to look at me. I do not, then, put my light under a bushel, but on a candlestick. True, I assure people that I have not in the least contributed to that which has made thee a great man and poet (for praise that does not belong to me I never accept) ; besides, I know very well to whom the praise and glory belong ; for toward thy organization within me, as all was placed in thee already in the germ, I have truly done nothing. A grain of brain more or less, perhaps, and thou wouldst have been a very ordinary man, for where there is nothing within, nothing can come out. Judge thou, all the female philanthropists in all Europe could not give that. Good, useful men—yes, that I will allow ; but here the question is of the extraordinary. So, then, my dear Frau Aja, thou hast most properly and justly given the honor to God, as is fair and right. Now, in regard to my light which stands on the candlestick, and shines pleasantly in the professors' eyes. The gift which God has given me is a lively descriptive power of all things that come within my knowledge, great and small, truth and romance, and so on. As soon as I enter a circle, all are bright and cheerful while I narrate. Thus I

talked to the professors, and they came and went away delighted. That is the whole trick. Yet one more thing belongs to it : I always make a friendly face, which pleases people and costs nothing, as our blessed Merck used to say.

I long very much for the Blocksberg—that was a silly expression—one might think that I was awaiting with anxiety the 1st of May \* So, then, for the description of thy Blocksberg † I am waiting ; thus it is better expressed. Greet old friends.

126. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 27th Octbr, 1807.

Since the 24th of this month we are having here a splendid show. The Imperial Guards are passing through to Mainz, to their own country. The 24th came 1821 jaegers on foot, day before yesterday 1767 grenadiers on foot ; yesterday they held a review on the Rossmarkt. To-day are coming 2372 fusileers ; Wednesday, 1091 mounted jaegers ; Thursday, 657 dragoons, and the 31st, 1051 mounted grenadiers. Nay, anything like this the world has not yet seen : all as if they came out of a cupboard—not a stain, not a spot—and then the splendid music. It is with me as with the dog in the fable : stave it off I cannot. I will not let myself be torn in pieces ; just like the dogs, I eat with the rest. Which is, being interpreted, I cherish life while yet the taper glows, seek for no thorns, snatch the little joys,

---

\* On the eve of May-day witches were said to dance on the Blocksberg, or Brocken, the highest peak of the Harz Mountains.

† In "Faust."

stoop if the doors are low ; if I can push the stone out of the way, do so ; if it is too heavy, go around it, and thus every day I find something that rejoices me, and the key-stone—belief in God. That makes my heart glad and my countenance joyous. I know that it is well with me and mine, and that the leaves not even wither, to say nothing of the stem. To-day we have been notified of a large quartering of soldiers, the above-named 2372 men. I must regale them with roast pork.

*127. Frau Rath to Goethe's Wife.*

The 14th Novbr, 1807.

The Brentano family are here again (except Bettina, who is still in Cassel). They cannot come to an end of praising and lauding and giving thanks : there is nothing like the way they have fared with you, the honor done them, the pleasure they have enjoyed. *Summa summarum*—such excellent people, such a handsome house, such a staircase, such a play—this is all to be found only at Goethe's. It has all been told only piecemeal, for they are not to anticipate Bettine, who wants to tell me everything herself. You, my dear ones, can easily imagine what a day of rejoicing you have thereby made for me, and what joy awaits me in Bettine's narration. For this joy also, I thank you all heartily.

*128. Frau Rath to Goethe.*

Friday, the 15th January, 1808.

Bettine is beside herself with joy over thy letter. She brought it to me in triumph, as well as over

Herr Riemer's verses. Weimar is her heaven, and the angels (the whole country is included) are you all! Betine told me Fräul. von Göchhausen was dead; is it true?\*

Meline is much rejoiced that the little cap was so kindly received.

129. *Frau Rath to her Grandson, Augustus Goethe.*

The 28th March, 1808.

We have now a museum too. Thy father's bust stands there near our Prince Primate's. The place of honor on the left is not yet occupied; it should in justice be a Frankforter. Yes, ye may wait a while! On such an occasion or opportunity Kästner's capital epigram always occurs to me: "Ihr Fürsten, Grafen und Prälaten, auch Herrn und Städte insgemein, vor 20 Species Ducaten, denk doch! soll einer Goethe sein.†"

---

The Prince Primate, Charles Theodore von Dalberg, was an interesting figure of the times. The Dalbergs early took a prominent position in Germany. At the coronation ceremonies, as soon as the crown had been placed on the emperor's head it was the custom for the herald to cry out, "Ist kein Dalberg da?" (Is there no Dalberg here?) where-

---

\* Fraülein von Göchhausen died on the 7th of September, 1807.

† Ye Princes, Counts, and Prelates, also Lords and Towns, usually among twenty gold ducats, just think, there will be but one Goethe. These princes and towns are addressed because they had the right of coining money.

upon the representative of this family advanced and was made by the emperor first knight of the empire.

The subject of the present sketch was born in 1744. He became early the recipient of ecclesiastical honors. At the age of nine years he was prebend of the Archbishopric of Mainz, in the next year prebend of Wurzburg and Worms, at fourteen Canon at Worms, at twenty-four Canon at Mainz, at twenty-six Vicar-General of Worms and Privy Councillor to the Elector of Mainz. In 1792 he was appointed Governor of Erfurt, which belonged to the Electorate of Mainz. This position he occupied more than fifteen years, and was in intimate relations with the neighboring court of Weimar and its literary circle. Frequent mention is made of the Statthalter (his official title) in the correspondence of the time. In a letter to Frau von Stein (5th May, 1780) Goethe writes of him: "By his narrations, drawn from his varied political activity, he lifts my mind out of the simple web I spin about me, which, although having many threads, yet gradually confines me too much to a central point. . . . He has remarkable adroitness in civil and political affairs, and an enviable readiness." In 1787 von Dalberg was made Coadjutor to the Elector of Mainz, a position which implied the succession to that electorate. Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar interested himself actively in favor of this appointment. In 1802 he succeeded to the Electorate of Mainz and the Arch-Chancellorship of the Holy Roman Empire, to which, in the following year, were added the Archbishopric of Ratisbon, with the cities of Aschaffenburg and Wetzlar. In 1805, by the treaty of Lunéville the left bank

of the Rhine was ceded to the French, by which von Dalberg lost the greater portion of his electorate; to compensate him he was made Prince Primate of the Confederation of the Rhine, and to provide a revenue consistent with his dignity as presiding officer of the Diet, a portion of the Rhine tolls was assigned to him by Napoleon.

Von Dalberg was from the first a great admirer of the genius of Napoleon. He was present at Paris at the latter's coronation, and was made corresponding member of the Institute, succeeding to Klopstock. In spite of his admiration for Napoleon, he felt that the French ascendancy in Germany should be resisted, and at the time of the formation of the third coalition against Napoleon he issued a proclamation in favor of it to all the states of the German Empire. The battle of Austerlitz gave the decisive blow to the coalition, and von Dalberg, believing further resistance useless, accepted without reserve the Napoleonic rule. Alluding to his presidency of the Diet, and his revenue from the Rhine tolls, he said jestingly to Napoleon after the battle of Austerlitz, "*Quant à moi, Sire, je n'ai rien à perdre, vous m'avez déjà mis à la diète et à l'eau.*" Napoleon did not, however, withdraw his favor, and when, later on, to appease the demands of Bavaria it became necessary to take Ratisbon from him, the free town of Frankfort was deprived of its autonomy and handed over to von Dalberg, who took the title of Grand Duke of Frankfort.

Under these circumstances it was not to be expected that the Frankforters should be very much pleased with their Grand Duke. They gave him, however,

the credit of his good intentions: he interested himself actively for the charitable institutions of the town, and promoted the creation of the beautiful boulevards which surround the town, and form one of the most charming features of modern Frankfort. But, with all his good intentions, he was, like many German princes of his day, but a puppet on a wire which was pulled in Paris, and in his grand duchy the birthday of the Emperor Napoleon was expected to be celebrated as if on French territory.

The war of 1813 found von Dalberg on the unpopular side, and he was too old to change again. He abdicated his grand duchy and retired to Ratisbon, where he passed the remainder of his life in retirement and comparative poverty. He died in 1817.

130. *Frau Rath to Goethe's Wife.*

The 22d April, 1808.

Augustus has dined at our Prince's (the Primate's) with me. The Prince drank my son's health, and was thoroughly charming. The play was a great pleasure to him; he was there every evening. The Schlossers, Brentanos, Gernings; Leonhardis showed him much friendship.

---

In Eckermann's "Conversations with Goethe," there is the following passage about this dinner: "Dined with Frau von Goethe. Young Goethe related some pleasant anecdotes of his grandmother, Frau Rath Goethe, of Frankfort, whom he had visited twenty years before as a student, and with whom he was one day invited to dine at the Prince Primate's. The

Prince, as a mark of particular politeness, had come to meet the Frau Rath on the stairs ; but as he wore his usual clerical costume, she took him for an abbé and paid him no particular respect. Even when first seated by his side at table, she did not put on the most friendly face. In the course of the conversation, however, she gradually perceived, from the deportment of the rest of the guests, that he was the Primate. The Prince then drank her health and that of her son, whereupon she rose and proposed the health of his Highness."

131. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 3d June, 1808.

Thy letter of the 9th May has refreshed and highly delighted me. Yes, yes, vineyards are still planted on the mountains of Samaria ;\* there is planting and piping ! As often as I hear anything good from thee all the promises treasured in my heart spring to life again. He keepeth truth forever, hallelujah ! He will this time also bless Carlsbad,† and will let me always hear good news of you.

Betine is in the Rheingau ; but all the good that thou hast written of her she shall faithfully be informed of.

132. *Frau Rath to Goethe.*

The 1st July, 1808.

Thy little note of the 22d June was again an excellent, precious, delightful apparition to me. God

---

\* See Letter 30, note.

† Where Goethe was going for the benefit of the waters.



bless the cure still farther, and cause the old trouble entirely to disappear.

Thy dear friendly letter to Betine I have not yet been able to forward to her. She darts about like a will-o-the-wisp, now in the Rheingau, now somewhere else. As soon as she comes she shall have this happiness.

Herr Werner is here. Frau von Stael, born Necker, has been here.

---

The above is the last of the Frau Rath's published letters. She died on the 13th of September, 1808, in her seventy-eighth year, receiving with cheerful resignation from her nephew and physician, Dr. Melber, whom she dearly loved, the intelligence that her last hours had come.

Falk gives a characteristic anecdote of her old age, which sums up those traits of serene trust and light-heartedness with which her letters abound :

“ In her old age, at a time when she had been many weeks molested by the troubles attendant upon age, she said to a friend who had come to inquire after her health, ‘ Thank God ! I am once more contented with myself, and can endure myself for a few weeks longer. Till now I have been quite intolerable, and have striven against God like a little child that never knows what it needs. But yesterday I could stand myself no longer, I gave myself a good scolding, and said, “ Ay, art thou not ashamed of thyself, old Rätthin ! Thou hast had good days enough, and Wolfgang besides, and now when the evil days come thou shouldst make the best of them,

and not pull such a wry face ! What does it mean that thou art so impatient and naughty when the blessed God lays a cross on thee ? Dost thou want, then, to walk upon roses forever, and art past the goal, over seventy years old ! ” Look you, this is what I said to myself, and directly there set in an improvement, and I grew better because I was no longer so naughty.’ ”

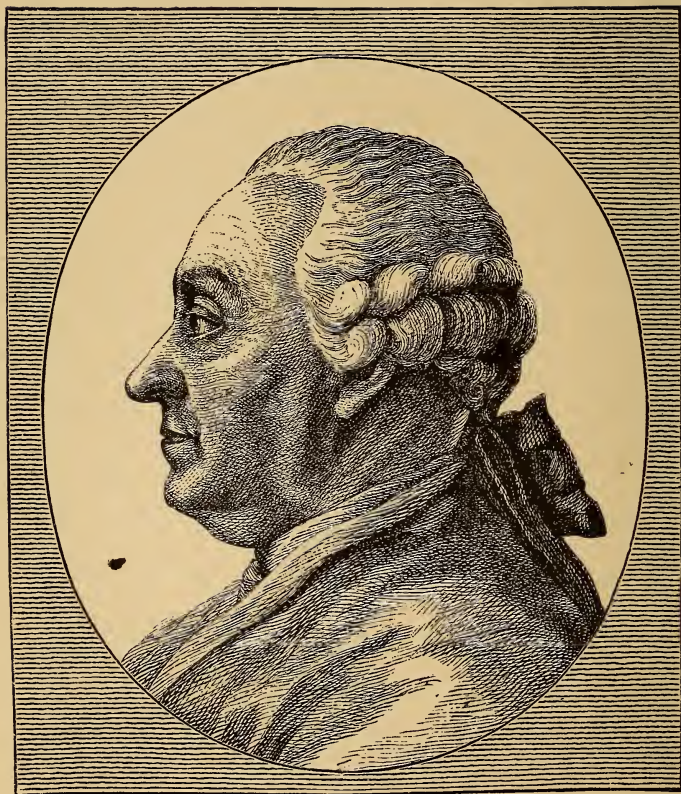
In 1844, when the statue of Goethe was to be unveiled in Frankfort, Bettina von Arnim was seized with a very happy inspiration. “ I see from the programme,” she wrote to the committee, “ that the procession will pass the house where Goethe’s mother spent her last years. You will doubtless halt there and give a solemn salute with the trumpets in memory of your amiable fellow-townswoman, who so clung with her whole heart to her native town. And it would be very appropriate if, among all the garlands which on that day shall be brought to the statue of Goethe, the best and holiest crown, after having adorned the son’s head should be laid upon his mother’s grave ; this would fully express the sympathy with that enthusiasm which through this woman’s whole life was the reflection of the purest happiness. ”

The cemetery where the Frau Rath was buried is now disused, and is a public walk. The Frau Rath’s last resting-place has been marked by a stone with the inscription, “ Der Grab der Frau Rath Goethe. ” The spot has many visitors, and none can fail to note the appropriateness of the place in the very heart of the city she loved. The coronation ceremonies, which were once counted among the glories of Frank-

fort, have gone their way into the lumber-room of the past, but the Frau Rath gave to the world an emperor in the realm of thought, the splendor of whose genius has shed a lustre on his birthplace such as Holy Roman Emperor never gave.







GOETHE'S FATHER, JOHANN CASPAR GOETHE.

*From Lavater's "Physiognomy."*

## THE GOETHE HOUSE AT FRANKFORT.

(SEE TITLE-PAGE.)

---

THE Goethe House in the Hirschgraben at Frankfort-on-the-Main came into the possession of the Goethe family, and first began to have a history, in the year 1733. In that year it was bought by Frederick George Goethe's widow, the poet's grandmother. The widow Goethe had inherited a handsome property from her first husband, the proprietor of the hotel "Zum Weidenhof." For her second husband she had married Frederick George Goethe, a tailor, who for her sake dropped the shears and carried on the business of the hotel until he died in 1730, leaving his widow with two sons. In 1733 the eldest son died, and in the same year the widow sold the hotel and bought this house in the Hirschgraben, to which she retired with her only remaining son, John Caspar, the poet's father. The house at that time consisted of two bulidings, a large and a small one, the partition walls of which had been broken through, and the different levels of the floors overcome by steps. As long as the grandmother lived the house remained in this condition, but the poet's father was for many years busied with plans for its reconstruction. In 1754 the grandmother died, and in the following year the rebuilding was begun, the future poet, at the age of six, dressed as a bricklayer, laying the corner-stone. In 1795 John Caspar Goethe's widow, the poet's mother, sold the house to Herr Blum, a wine merchant. Herr Blum sold it the same year to the widow of the Procurator Roessing.

In the possession of the Roessing family the house remained until 1863, when it was bought by public subscription and placed in the hands of an association called the Free German Foundation (Freies Deutsches Hochstift), to be held by them in trust for the German people.

Such is the simple chronology of a house whose associations render it one of the most interesting in Germany. It has been restored as nearly as possible to its original condition, and its rooms are now used for society meetings and for the purposes of reading and study. Some few articles of the original furniture have with difficulty been secured, but the chief interest to the visitor is in recalling on the spot the story of Goethe's home life. Therefore, before describing these bare though speaking walls, we pause to consider the *dramatis personæ* of the family circle in which grew up the wise poet, the reflection of whose genius has made them all illustrious.

The widow of Frederick George Goethe had spared no pains upon the education of her only remaining son, John Caspar. He had been sent to the gymnasium at Coburg, reputed one of the first schools of that day; went thence to the University at Leipsic, where he studied law, and, later, took the degree of Doctor-at-Law at the University of Giessen. A few years after he came with his mother to live in the house in the Hirschgraben, Dr. Goethe, then in his thirtieth year, made a journey to Italy. In the year 1740 a journey to Italy was an event, and it left upon the poet's father an ineffaceable impression. Twenty-six years after, when the poet in his turn was in Italy, he wrote from Naples: "I can forgive all those who go out of their wits in Naples, and remember with emotion my father, who received an indelible impression from these very objects which to-day I have seen for the first time; and as it is said that he to whom a ghost has appeared will never be joyous again, so in an opposite sense it might be said



of him that he never could be unhappy, because he always in thought turned back to Naples." The father brought home engravings, curiosities, collections, and bric-à-brac of many kinds. Views of St. Peter's, the Castle of San Angelo, the Colosseum, etc., were hung about the house, and became associated with the poet's earliest recollections. The father's time and thoughts were occupied for many years in arranging his collections, and in writing out his diary in the Italian language with the greatest care and minuteness. He read, wrote, spoke, and sang Italian—in short, Italy became a very hobby with him for the rest of his life.

Dr. Goethe now anticipated taking a part in the world, but found his hopes quickly frustrated.

"My father," writes the poet, "as soon as he had returned from his travels, had, in accordance with his own peculiar character, formed the project—in order to prepare himself for the service of the city—of undertaking one of the subordinate offices and filling it without emolument, provided it were given him without his being subjected to the ballot. According to his way of thinking, and the conception he had of himself, and in the consciousness of his good intentions, he believed himself worthy of such a distinction, although, in fact, it was in accordance with neither law nor precedent. Consequently, when his request was refused, he fell into ill-humor and vexation—swore that he would never take any position whatever; and in order to render it impossible, procured for himself the title of Imperial Councillor (Kaiserlicher Rath), which the Chief Magistrate (Schultheiss) and the eldest judges bore as a special mark of distinction. In this way he made himself the equal of those in the highest positions, and could no longer begin at the bottom of the ladder."

The Imperial Councillor next turned his attention to matrimony, and sued for and obtained the hand of Cath-

arine Elizabeth Textor, the daughter of the Schultheiss. The bride was not yet eighteen years old, twenty years younger than her husband, nor was this difference ever compensated for by sympathy in thought or feeling. The wife felt herself to be, as was the fact, not so far separated by years from her children as from her husband. She had married because her parents thought the offer an eligible one, and she found herself in the hands of a grim, pedantic, solemn schoolmaster ; for Rath Goethe's marriage brought out in him a second hobby, namely, the most rigid pedagogy. He was a man with absolutely nothing to do, who had been carefully crammed with all the book-learning of his day, and it became with him a sort of monomania to impart his knowledge to others. The young wife was, accordingly, at once set to work at writing from dictation, playing on the harpsichord, singing, studying Italian, etc. The birth of the poet brought her her first vacation, but gradually, the children offering a fresh field for the pedagogue's labors, the wife's education came to be looked upon as completed. Goethe thus sketches the situation :

“ A father, certainly affectionate and well-meaning, but grave, who, because he cherished within a very tender heart, manifested outwardly, with incredible persistency, a brazen sternness, that he might attain the end of giving his children the best education, and of building up, regulating, and preserving his well-founded house. A mother, on the other hand, still almost a child, who first grew into consciousness with and in her two eldest children. These three, as they looked out on the world with healthy glances, felt a capacity for life and a longing for present enjoyment. This contradiction floating in the family increased with years. My father followed out his views unshaken and uninterrupted ; the mother and children could not give up their feelings, their claims, their desires.”

The poet, in recurring to his boyhood, naturally dwells upon his father's severity, which was the paramount impression of that period of his life. But we should not be unjust to Rath Goethe; he was a man to be respected, though not beloved; if formality and sternness be faults, at least they lean toward virtue's side, and as far as instruction goes, he had not simply a passion for it, but great talent. The education he gave his son was, it is true, very different from that the son would have obtained in any school of that day or this, and seems very desultory and imperfect to those accustomed to the rigid uniformity of schools.

Music, drawing, reading, writing, dancing, history, geography, fencing, languages, ancient, modern, and Oriental—everything seemed to be going on at once. Yet this want of method in so methodical a man suited the universality of the son's genius, which it might have been difficult to bind down to the routine of a school. Rath Goethe did not pay much attention to the order in which the studies were pursued, so that the children were always busied with something which he thought important. It was one of the characteristics of Goethe's activity of mind that he could all his life spring from one subject to another, even the most diverse; but it was also a part of his nature to busy himself about half a dozen different things almost at the same time, and leave them all incomplete. This trait must have been a severe trial to the father, for his rule was that everything begun should be completed, and if a book which he had chosen to be read aloud in the family circle proved never so tedious, it must be read through, even if he were himself the first to set the example of yawning. In spite of the many-sidedness of Goethe's mind, there was little place there for mathematics—a line of thought which was not very far pursued in his education, and which he never could appreciate. Later in life, when mathematicians of-

ferred to prove by geometric formulæ that his theory of colors was false, he could not comprehend them, and believed that they were trifling with him. He approached the problems of nature, not as an unimpassioned investigator, but as a poet, and the wonderful generalizations which he made in botany and anatomy—theories which are now accepted and acknowledged—sprang from his intense poetic conception of the necessary unity of nature.

Not a ray of the poet's genius can be traced to his father ; in the son's youth and young manhood the joyous disposition and lively imagination which he received from his mother were his most conspicuous qualities ; but as he grew old he came more and more to resemble his father, and in the dignified formality of what was called Goethe's "official manner" the old Frankfort Councillor seems to appear again before us.

The rebuilding of the house was one of the great events of Goethe's childhood. The family remained in it through nearly the whole period of the work. The upper stories were supported, and the house rebuilt from below upward. Goethe writes :

"This new epoch was a very surprising and remarkable one for the children. To see falling before the mason's pick and the carpenter's axe the rooms in which they had been so often cooped up and pestered with wearisome lessons and tasks, the passages in which they had played, the walls for whose cleanliness and preservation so much care had been taken, to see this work going on from below upward while they were suspended, as it were, in the air, propped up on beams, and yet all the time to be held to an appointed lesson, to a definite task—all this brought a confusion into our young heads which it was not so easy to clear away again. But the inconveniences were felt less by the young people, because they had more space for play than before, and had many opportunities of balancing on rafters and playing at see-saw with the boards."

The rebuilding was begun in the spring of 1755, and was at least so far completed before the winter that the family could resume their usual course of life. Much remained to be done for the adornment and completion of the interior. The father's books were rearranged, and the pictures, which had been scattered through the house, were collected together, set in black and gilt frames, and hung in one room in symmetrical order. With the Herr Rath's intense love of order and minute attention to details, all these arrangements, together with the decorating and furnishing of the rooms, were extended over a long period of time. In the course of this work so much that was superfluous was found that the Herr Rath (who never allowed anything to be lost) determined to have a sale by auction, at which, among other things, he sold his mother's clothes and house-linen. The following advertisement appeared in the *Frankfort Advertiser*, April 25, 1758 :

“ By superior authority, on the coming Monday, May 1st, and the following days, at the house of Rath Goethe, in the Grosse Hirschgraben, will be sold, by the sworn auctioneer, to the highest bidder, various movables in the following order : First, several firearms, among them a new *mousqueton* ; next, various articles of wood-work, together with a still serviceable lattice\* for a house-door, three large house-clocks ; then, tin and brass articles, etc. Further, several empty casks ; next, a violin and an ebony *flute-traversière* ; further, a number of law, practical, and historical books, and among these a set of the well-known ‘ Elzevir Republics,’ together with about one hundred and eighty-two unbound complete copies of D. Wahl's ‘ *Dissert. de usufr. conjugum pacitio* ;’ further, several silk and cotton dresses ; and lastly, a moderate assortment of

---

\* The *Geräms* through which the mischievous Wolfgang threw all the kitchen dishes for the amusement of his playmates, the Ochsensteins, across the way. See the Autobiography.

good linen articles, mostly for women, as well as various articles not included under the above heads."

Turning to the year 1794, in Goethe's diary we find a pleasant retrospect of the reconstructed, refurnished home. Nearly forty years have passed away since all were so busy with its refurnishing. 'The Herr Rath is long since dead ; the French Revolution has come, with the troublous times which followed it, and Goethe's mother begins to find the large house a source of anxiety and care.

" 'The handsome citizen's house which my mother had enjoyed since my father's death had been a burden to her ever since the beginning of hostilities, although she had not ventured to acknowledge it ; yet during my last year's visit I had explained her situation to her, and urged her to free herself from such a burden. But just at that time it was unadvisable to do what one felt to be necessary. A house newly built within our lifetime, a convenient and becoming citizen's residence, a well-cared-for wine-cellar, household articles of all kinds and in good taste for their time ; collections of books, pictures, copper-plates, maps, antiquities, small objects of art and curiosities ; very many remarkable things which my father out of inclination and knowledge had collected about him as opportunity offered—all was still there together ; it all, by place and position, was conveniently and usefully united, and only as a whole had it really its acquired worth. Thinking of it as divided and scattered, one must necessarily fear to see it wasted or lost."

This dispersion, which Goethe looked foward to with pain, took place in the next year, 1795.

One enters the Goethe mansion from the street by three steps, and comes into a large hall extending the whole depth of the house from front to rear. On the right are rooms which were used for storerooms and for the servants ; on the left are the kitchen, in the rear, and the

family dining-room, toward the street. In the latter occurred the well-known tragi-comic barber scene. It was at the time when Klopstock's "Messiah" was in the height of its popularity. Rath Goethe had been educated in the opinion, very prevalent in his day, that poetry and rhyme were inseparable ; and as the "Messiah" was not written in rhyme, it was very plain to him that it could not be poetry, and he would have none of it. A friend of the family, at the same time an enthusiast for Klopstock, smuggled the book into the house. The mother and children were delighted with it, and the latter learned large portions of it by heart. Goethe relates :

"We divided between us the wild, despairing dialogue between Satan and Adramelech, who have been cast into the Red Sea. The first part, as the most violent, fell to my share ; the second, a little more pathetic, my sister undertook. The alternate curses, horrible indeed yet well-sounding, thus flowed from our lips, and we seized every opportunity to greet each other with these infernal phrases.

"It was a Saturday evening in winter. My father always had himself shaved by candle-light, in order to be able on Sunday morning to dress for church at his leisure. We sat on a footstool behind the stove, and while the barber put on the lather, murmured in moderately low tones our customary imprecations. But now Adramelech had to lay iron hands on Satan. My sister seized me violently, and recited softly enough, but with increasing passion :

"Give me thine aid, I entreat thee ; will worship thee if thou requirest—

Thee, thou monster abandoned ; yes, thee, of all criminals blackest.

Aid me ; I suffer the tortures of death, which is vengeful, eternal.

Once, in the time gone by, with a hot, fierce hate I could hate thee,

Now I can hate thee no more. E'en this is the sharpest of tortures.'

“ Thus far everything had gone tolerably well ; but loudly, with a terrible voice, she shouted out the following words :

“ ‘ O, wie bin ich zermalmt !  
Oh, how am I crushed ! ’

“ The good barber was startled, and upset the lather basin over my father’s breast. There was a great uproar, and a severe investigation was held, especially in view of the mischief that might have resulted had the shaving been actually going forward. In order to remove from ourselves all suspicion of wantonness, we confessed to our satanic characters, and the misfortune occasioned by the hexameters was too apparent for them not to be anew condemned and banished.”

The wide staircase begins in the large hall on the ground floor, and leads on each story to a spacious antechamber or hall, out of which all the rooms open. These antechambers on each floor, with large windows toward the garden or court, are frequently referred to by Goethe as having been the delight of his childhood. In them the family passed much of their time during the warm season of the year, and the children found there ample space for play. On the second floor were the “ best rooms.” We learn in an early chapter of “ Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship” that they had what was called English furniture, and wall-paper of a Chinese pattern. Hardly had the old Rath got them furnished to his mind when the Seven Years’ War broke out ; Frankfort was occupied by the French, and the Count Thorane from Provence was billeted upon him. The Count, a well-bred and highly cultivated nobleman, did everything in his power to make his presence as little burdensome as possible, and even refrained from hanging up his maps on the Chinese wall-paper. The friends of the family were never wearied in dwelling on the Herr Rath’s good fortune that so gentle-



manly an occupant had fallen to his lot. But the Herr Rath would listen to no palliative suggestions ; he was almost beside himself with rage at seeing his best rooms, the apple of his eye, seized upon by strangers and enemies ; and, added to this, he was so fierce a partisan for " Old Fritz " that during the whole time of the Count's stay, which extended to about three years, Rath Goethe went about with a thorn in his flesh, and on one occasion gave vent to his long pent-up wrath in such terms that only the urgent intercessions of his wife and friends saved him from immediate arrest. The mother and children were at once on the best of terms with the Count, who often sent the children cake and ices from his table ; but the ices, to the children's great distress, the mother always threw out of the window, declaring, in her honest simplicity, that she did not believe the human stomach could digest ice, be it ever so much sweetened. Goethe dwells at some length on this very important period of his boyhood, and the influences upon his own growth and development which arose from Count Thorane's residence in his father's house.

The rooms which the Count occupied consist of one large central drawing-room having four windows to the street, with rooms opening out of it on each side, that on the left having two windows, and the smaller one on the right but one. The Count was subject to fits of dejection or hypochondria, at which times he would retire for days and see no one but his servant. He filled the post of Lieutenant du Roi, a sort of Judge-Advocate, whose business it was to decide upon all cases of strife arising between soldiers or between soldiers and citizens ; but when his hypochondria seized him, not the most urgent cases could draw him from the little one-windowed nest to the right of the drawing-room, which he had chosen for his " growlery." The family learned from the servant's gos-

sip that the Count once, when this fit was on him, had given what he afterward thought a very unrighteous decision, and hence his determination to retire entirely at such seasons from all participation in human affairs.

Passing up the stairs from the second to the third floor, we notice the monograms J. C. G., C. E. G., in the wrought-iron stair railing. We cross the cheerful ante-chamber and come to the apartments which the family occupied. The division of the rooms is slightly different from that on the floor below, the central room being smaller, with but three windows, the side rooms having each two. The central room was the family drawing-room; here, as has been mentioned, all the pictures were hung after the rebuilding, hence it was usually called the picture-room." Count Thorane, a great lover of art, hearing the picture-room spoken of on the night of his arrival, insisted upon seeing it at once, and went over each picture with a candle in his hand. To the left of the picture-room was the Herr Rath's library, study, and special sanctum. Besides its two front windows it has a little window in the side wall, giving a good view up the street. A few lines in the Autobiography explain its use. "I slipped home," Goethe writes, "by a roundabout way, for on the side toward the kleiner Hirschgraben my father, not without the opposition of his neighbor, had had a small *guckfenster* (peep-hole) made in the wall; this side we avoided when we did not wish him to see us coming home." To the right of the picture-room was the Frau Rath's sitting-room, and behind and communicating with it, looking toward the court, the parents' bedroom—the room in which the poet was born—and in the wing, still farther in the rear, the children's bedroom.

On the fourth floor we come to the Mansard rooms—the poet's rooms—which require a few words of preface. From the time of its sale in 1795 by Goethe's mother until the

death of the poet in 1832, the Goethe house seems to have been little thought of. But the renewed interest in a great man's history which is always awakened by his death, brought again into notice the house in which Goethe was born. The Roessing family, in whose possession it was, were at first very much astonished at the frequent applications to see the house. The first one occurred in the year after Goethe's death, and, from that time, the number of visitors increased day by day. There is on the fourth floor a small attic room to which some obscure tradition was attached as having been Goethe's room. The Roessings accepted this tradition without investigation, and thus for thirty-five years, it was the custom to conduct visitors at once to this little attic and point it out to them as Goethe's chamber where he had written his earlier works. Of course it was not long before it got the name of the Werther-Zimmer, and Bettina von Arnim unconsciously added to the apocryphal character of her book ("Goethe's Correspondence with a Child") by having a view of the Werther-Zimmer engraved as a frontispiece to it. So striking a confirmation of the supposed fondness of the Muses for garrets could not fail to be noted, and many a sage visitor doubtless dwelt upon the coincidence that the rich man's son must go to the garret to mount his Pegasus. But the whole romance of the Werther attic has been crumbled in the dust by Dr. G. H. Otto Volger, who, with true German patience and industry, has so thoroughly investigated every point in connection with the Goethe mansion. It is not necessary to follow Dr. Volger into all the details of his proof. The chief points are : 1st. That the so-called Werther room is not in the *gable*, and has no rooms communicating with it. 2d. That it never has a ray of morning sun. In regard to the first point, Goethe constantly speaks of his room as a *gable room* (Giebelzimmer), having other rooms communicating

with it. In regard to the second point, the fact that Goethe's room had the morning sun is established by the poet's well-known account of his morning sacrifice to the Almighty, after the Old Testament fashion, when the rays of the morning sun, concentrated through a burning-glass, were made to light the pastilles on the boy's extemporized altar. Dr. Volger selects the long celebrated attic as the place where the silkworms were kept, and where the engravings were bleached, as so circumstantially described in the Autobiography.

Passing by the Werther room, which is directly to the right on reaching the top of the staircase, and crossing the antechamber, similar to those on the other floors, one comes to the poet's rooms. The central one is a pleasant and spacious reception-room, where the son of the house could receive with dignity, and without apology, the friends and the visitors of distinction whom the success of "Goetz" and of "Werther" attracted to him from every quarter. It stands at present bare and cheerless, but we can picture to ourselves the simple furniture, the books, the pictures, the casts from the antique—heads of the Laocoon group, and of Niobe and her children—and the minerals, and the natural curiosities which bore witness to the mental activity and versatility of its occupant. The house directly opposite is the only one in the Hirschgraben, except the Goethe mansion, which remains unchanged, so that, in looking from the poet's window, the outline and general effect of the opposite house are precisely what they were when the boy-worshipper stood in the early morning light waiting for the sun to peer over its roof and kindle his altar fire. This house, in the Goethes' time, was occupied by the family Von Ochsenstein, whose sons were Wolfgang's playmates.

The last years of Goethe's residence at home, before he accepted the invitation of the Grand Duke of Saxe-

Weimar, were those of his early fame as the author of "Goetz" and "Werther," and his growing reputation brought many new elements into the family life. Everybody of distinction, especially of literary distinction, who came to Frankfort, sought the acquaintance of Goethe, and the stately house in the Hirschgraben was enlivened by visitors of many qualities, who were received with a formal but generous hospitality. The old Rath did his best to preserve a polite silence when sentiments were uttered which shocked all his preconceptions, while the mother won all hearts by her good-nature, jollity, and sound common-sense. The departure of the poet for Weimar made no very great change in this respect; the admirers of the poet came to pay their respects to his parents, and a visit to Goethe's mother, especially, was looked forward to as an honor and a pleasure. The house came to be generally known among Goethe's friends as the *Casa Santa*, a name it probably first received from Wieland.

In 1779 the poet came himself, bringing with him his friend, the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Nobles, tradespeople, and hotel-keepers were open-mouthed with wonder at seeing a grand duke dwelling in a simple citizen's house. But the disappointment of the father that his son had not followed the path of a jurist, for which he had drilled him during his boyhood, was, perhaps, amply made up for when the son returned home a Privy-Councillor (Geheim-Rath), and brought a grand duke to Frankfort as his guest.

In 1782 the Herr Rath died, in his seventy-second year. For thirteen years the Frau Rath lived alone in the *Casa Santa*—nominally, at least, alone, for the stream of visitors was almost constant. "I am much more fortunate than Frau von Reck," she writes; "that lady must travel about in order to see Germany's learned men, they all visit me in my house, which is by far more convenient—yes.

yes, those to whom God is gracious, He blesses in their sleep." \*

Our visit to Goethe's early home terminates with the inspection of his own rooms on the fourth floor. We return to the consideration of what we have ventured to call the *dramatis personæ* of the home circle, and having already spoken of the father, we now come to the sister and the mother.

The relations between Goethe and his sister Cornelia were of the most intimate kind. There was but a year's difference in their ages, and they were often taken to be twins. They shared together the joys and sorrows of childhood, and no new experience was complete until communicated to the other. The brother's departure for the University of Leipsic was their first separation, and in Wolfgang's absence, Cornelia led a weary life. All the father's pedagogy was now exerted upon her. He left her no time for social pleasures or for associating with other young girls; an occasional concert was her only relaxation. Even the relation of mutual confidence between the brother and sister was entirely broken up, as all their letters passed through the father's hands. It was, therefore, not strange when Goethe returned home, after an absence of nearly three years, that he found the father and daughter living in a state of almost open hostility, and was himself made the confidant of his sister's complaints, and of his mother's anxieties in her position of mediator and peacemaker. Of his sister Goethe writes :

---

\* "Já, já, wem's Gott gönnt giebt er's im Schlaf"—an idiomatic phrase difficult to translate; a similar one, "Gott giebt es den Seinen im Schlaf" (God blesses his own in their sleep), is in frequent use in Germany. "Im Schlaf" is used to express anything that has been obtained without personal effort; for example, should any one become rich by inheritance or a sudden rise in values, the Germans would say, "Er ist reich geworden im Schlaf" (He has become rich in his sleep).

“ She had by turns to pursue and work at French, Italian, and English, besides which he (the father) compelled her to practise at the harpsichord a great part of the day. Writing also was not to be neglected, and I had already remarked that he had directed her correspondence with me, and communicated to me his teachings through her pen. My sister was, and still continued to be, an indefinable being, the most singular mixture of strength and weakness, of obstinacy and compliance, which qualities acted, now united, and now separated, at her own will and inclination. Thus she, in a manner which seemed to me terrible, had turned the hardness of her character against her father, whom she did not forgive, because during these three years he had forbidden or embittered to her many an innocent pleasure, and she would acknowledge no single one of his good and excellent qualities. She did all that he commanded or directed, but in the most unamiable manner in the world ; she did it in the established routine, but nothing more and nothing less ; out of love or favor she accommodated herself to nothing, so that this was one of the first things about which my mother complained in a private conversation with me.”

Cornelia seems to have inherited many of her father's traits of character, and the Herr Rath found his own inflexibility matched against the same quality, which had been transmitted to his child.

On Wolfgang's return from Leipsic the old confidential relations were resumed between the brother and the sister. All their thoughts and feelings were shared ; Cornelia read his letters from his University friends, and went over with him his replies to them. These were the happiest days of Cornelia's life ; they amount, deducting Wolfgang's absence for a year and a half at Strasburg, to about three years and a half. They are most interesting to us in connection with Cornelia's influence upon the produc-

tion of "Goetz von Berlichingen," as Goethe thus relates it :

"I had, as I proceeded, conversed circumstantially about it with my sister, who took part in such matters with heart and soul. I so often renewed this conversation without taking any steps toward beginning work, that she at length, impatient and interested, begged me earnestly not to be ever talking into the air, but once for all to set down on paper that which was so present to my mind. Determined by this impulse, I began one morning to write without having first sketched out any draft or plan. I wrote the first scenes, and in the evening they were read to Cornelia. She greatly applauded them, yet qualified her praise by the doubt whether I should so continue ; indeed, she expressed a decided unbelief in my perseverance. This stimulated me only the more. I went on the next day, and the third ; hope increased with the daily communications, and everything, step by step, gained more life as I became thoroughly master of the subject. Thus I kept myself uninterruptedly at the work, which I pursued straight onward, looking neither backward nor to the right or the left, and in about six weeks I had the pleasure of seeing the manuscript stitched."

Cornelia's memory is still further associated with her brother's first success by the discovery of her portrait sketched by Goethe in pencil on the margin of a proof-sheet of "Goetz." A copy of it is given by Professor Otto Jahn in his collection of "Goethe's Letters to his Leipsic Friends." (See *ante*, p. 47.) The resemblance to Goethe is strongly marked in the prominent nose, and, above all, in the large eyes, of which he wrote : "Her eyes are not the finest I have ever seen, but the deepest, behind which you expected the most ; and when they expressed any affection, any love, their brilliancy was unequalled." The face is interesting, but one that would be ordinarily classed among



the very plain. Cornelia became early conscious of this, and tormented herself with the conviction that no woman without personal beauty could expect to inspire any man with love. It does not seem to have occurred to her that mental accomplishments might make up for the lack of beauty. Probably she had little idea of her own mental qualities, the state of isolation in which she was brought up having deprived her of the means of comparing herself with other girls of her own age, and kept her in ignorance of her superiority—a superiority due, first, to her own mental powers, and, secondly, to her father's unflagging instructions. In her diary, which is given in Professor Jahn's book, she indulges at great length in these self-tormenting reflections. Hapless Cornelia! the world reads this diary, which was her one secret from her brother, and which she wrote in French, perhaps with the idea that, should it be mislaid, the foreign tongue would keep it secret from many. It is addressed to one of her female friends. She has been reading "Sir Charles Grandison," and thus gives utterance to her feelings in school-girl French :

"Je donnerais tout au monde pour pouvoir parvenir dans plusieurs années à imiter tant soit peu l'excellente Miss Byron. L'imiter? Folle que je suis; le puis-je? Je m'estimerais assez heureuse d'avoir la vingtième partie de l'esprit et de la beauté de cette admirable dame, car alors je serais une aimable fille; c'est ce souhait que me tient au cœur jour et nuit. Je serais à blâme si je désirais d'être une grande beauté; seulement un peu de finesse dans les traits, un teint uni, et puis cette grace douce qui enchante au premier coup de vue; voilà tout. Cependant ça n'est pas et ne sera jamais, quoique je puisse faire et souhaiter; ainsi il vaudra mieux de cultiver l'esprit et tâcher d'être supportable du moins de ce côté-là."

Further on :

"Vous aurez déjà entendue que je fais grand cas des

charmes extérieures, mais peut-être que vous ne savez pas encore que je les tiens pour absolument nécessaires au bonheur de la vie et que je crois pour cela que je ne serai jamais heureuse. . . . Epouserai-je un mari que je n'aime pas ? Cette pensée me fait honneur et cependant ce sera le seul parti qui me reste, car où trouver un homme aimable qui pensât à moi ? Ne croyez pas, ma chère, que ce soit grimace : Vous connaissez les replis de mon cœur, je ne vous cache rien, et pourquoi le ferais-je ?”

These words show by what sentiments she was actuated in accepting the hand of John George Schlosser. Her brother's absence at Strasburg had brought back again to her the wearisomeness of her home life. Goethe had now returned from Strasburg a Doctor-at-Law, but was soon to leave again for Wetzlar in continuation of his juristical studies, as marked out years before by his father. Cornelia saw the world opening to her brother, and felt that her only happiness was slipping from her grasp. Her life at home without Wolfgang was intolerable to her, and to escape from it she accepted the offer of marriage.

John George Schlosser was an early friend of her brother. He was ten years older than Goethe, and when he visited Leipsic during Goethe's stay there, the difference in age caused the latter to look up to Schlosser as in many respects his superior. Schlosser afterward edited a literary journal at Frankfort, to which Goethe contributed, and the intimate relations with the brother led to the acquaintance with the sister.

The bridegroom had been promised an appointment in the Grand Duchy of Baden, and expected to be placed at Carlsruhe, the capital. But hardly had the newly-married pair reached Carlsruhe when they learned that they were to reside in Emmendingen, a little village on the borders of the Black Forest, where Schlosser was to fill the post of Chief Magistrate of the County of Hochberg. Goethe

humorously hints that probably neither the Grand Duke nor his ministers cared to come too often in contact with Schlosser's blunt honesty, a view which is confirmed by Lavater's description of him as a man made to tell princes truths which no one else would dare to communicate to them. With this very honest and not very lively companion, for whom she had no stronger feeling than esteem, Cornelia went to her exile in the Black Forest. Schlosser was very much occupied with his duties as magistrate, and devoted his leisure moments to writing moral and religious catechisms for the people. Rath Goethe said of his son-in-law that he seemed never to be done with having books printed, and all his friends exerted themselves to moderate this mania for rushing into print. But, in spite of them all, he became a very voluminous writer of books, all of which, with the exception of some translations from the Greek, have long since gone into oblivion. Fancy a woman whose intellectual powers had been aroused and developed in the most intimate relations with a mind such as the world has rarely known—fancy such a woman shut up in the Black Forest with a man who wrote catechisms, and replies to Pope's "Essay on Man!" In a town she would have gathered about her a circle of which her great gifts would have made her the centre. Goethe says: "I must candidly confess that when I dwelt often in fancy upon her lot I could not think of her as a wife, but rather as an abbess, as the head of some honored community. She possessed every qualification that so lofty a position requires, but lacked those which the world persistently demands." In the lonely house in the Black Forest there was nothing left for Cornelia but intellectual and social starvation, to which was added ill health. She writes: "We are here entirely alone; there is no soul\* to be

---

\* That is, no one her equal in education or position.

found within three or four miles. My husband's occupations allow him to pass but little time with me, and so I drag slowly through the world with a body which is fit for nothing but the grave. Winter is always unpleasant and burdensome to me; the beauties of nature afford us here our single pleasure, and when nature sleeps, everything sleeps."

Cornelia died in childbed in the fourth year after her marriage, leaving two daughters, of whom the younger died in her sixteenth year, and the elder married Professor Nicolorius. Schlosser survived his wife many years, married again, died, and was buried at Frankfort; but pitiless fate left to Cornelia not even her remote and lonely grave at Emmendingen. The grave was obliterated during an enlargement of the churchyard, and thus, while the oaken coffin containing the remains of Wolfgang Goethe lies in state by that of Schiller in the Grand Ducal Vault at Weimar, the last resting place of Cornelia is not merely unmarked, but unknown.

The most widely-known and loved member of Goethe's family was his mother. She possessed the qualities which win affection—a joyous temperament, a strong desire to please every one, a lively imagination, hearty good nature, and great common-sense. Her youth and inexperience at the time of her marriage have already been alluded to. But she could not long remain a child in the difficult position in which she found herself between the children and the stern, exacting father. All her energies were bent to securing tranquillity in the household, and she was the pilot who, with ready skill and quick wit, carried them all safely through many a stormy passage. The Frau Rath survived her husband twenty-six years, and this was the happiest period of her life, when she realized all her fondest anticipations of her son's genius, and felt that there was no prouder title than that of Goethe's mother. She con-

cealed her joy and exaltation behind no thin mask of shyness, but openly laid claim to the honor she thought her due. She was very fond of singing in the circle of her friends her son's songs, which had been set to music by Reichardt; the song in *Faust* "Es war einmal ein König," she was especially fond of; she would call upon the company to make a chorus, and at the conclusion would place her hand upon her heart and proudly exclaim, "Den hab' ich geboren." \*

The coronation of the Emperor Leopold in 1790 filled Frankfort to overflowing, and guests were billeted upon all the inhabitants. The Frau Rath writes to Friedrich von Stein: "The quartermasters have not yet been here. Consequently I do not venture outside the door, and in this magnificent weather sit as it were in the Bastile, for if they should find me absent, they might take the whole house; these gentlemen are confounded quick at taking, and when they have once marked rooms, I would not advise any one to dispose of them in any other manner."

Two Mecklenburg princesses were assigned to her, one of whom became afterward Queen of Hanover, and the other the celebrated Queen Louisa of Prussia.

The Frau Rath conceived a great affection for these princesses, always speaking of them as "*my* princesses." They were afterward taken on a visit to the Elector's Court at Mayence, where a lady of high position at the court, Frau von Coudenhoven, reproved the Princess Louisa for appearing with long sleeves, which circumstance, coming to the knowledge of Frau Rath Goethe, filled her with indignation. Some years later, when the Princess Louisa had become Queen of Prussia, she came to Frankfort, and invited the Frau Rath to visit her at Wilhelmsbad, near Frankfort. The Queen took her to the spring, and had

---

\* Literally, "Him I bore," or as an English-speaking mother would probably have expressed it, "He is my son."

her sit by her side while the guests came to pay their respects. The Frau Rath asked the name of every one, and among them was Frau von Coudenhoven. "What! the one who was so cross? Please your Majesty, order her to cut off her sleeves!" exclaimed she in the greatest rage.

After she sold the house in the Hirschgraben the Frau Rath lived in hired apartments in a house on the Rossmarkt, near the central guard-house. The windows looked down the whole length of the Zeil, the principal street of Frankfort, and the lively old lady doubtless found much companionship in the busy scene. Before she died she had spent nearly all of her property. It was once suggested to Goethe that his mother should be placed under guardianship, a suggestion which he warmly resented, declaring that his mother had the right to spend everything, if she wished, after having borne close restraint so many years with the noblest patience.

She died on the 13th of September, 1808, having given, as Goethe relates in a letter to Zelter, the minutest directions in regard to her funeral, even to the kind of wine and the size of the cakes which were to be offered to the mourners. Others have added that she impressed it upon the servants not to put too few raisins in the cake, a thing she never could endure in her lifetime, and which would vex her in her grave. Hearing in the house the voice of an undertaker who had come to offer his services, she sent him a sum of money, with her regret that the arrangements had been already made.

The churchyard where the members of the Goethe family were buried is now a public promenade; here and there a monument or headstone, protected by a paling, remains to tell of its former use. The Goethe burial-place had long fallen into neglect, and been forgotten, when the centennial celebration of Goethe's birthday in 1849 awakened attention to it. The position of the Herr Rath's grave could

not be definitely ascertained, but the grave of Goethe's mother was found, and a simple stone was placed over it, inscribed, "Das Grab der Frau Rath Goethe," with the dates of birth and death. The grave is near the outside wall of the inclosure, a few rods from one of the gates. Few visitors to Frankfort fail to step aside to read the brief inscription, and note the appropriateness of the spot. As the daughter of a Chief Magistrate of Frankfort, and sprung from a family for many years represented in its councils, no more fitting burial-place could be found for Goethe's mother than in the very heart of the city where all her life was passed, and with which she so thoroughly identified herself. The busy life of the city goes on all about her grave, roses bloom over it, children play about it, and the whole place seems thoroughly in unison with the memory of this genial, large-hearted woman, one of the flowers of the Frankfort civilization of the last century.











LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 029 561 885 1